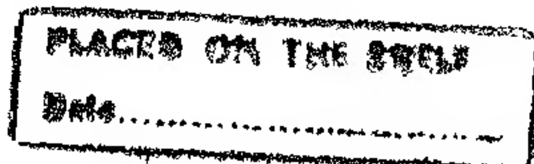
PHILOSOPHY OF PANCARATRAS

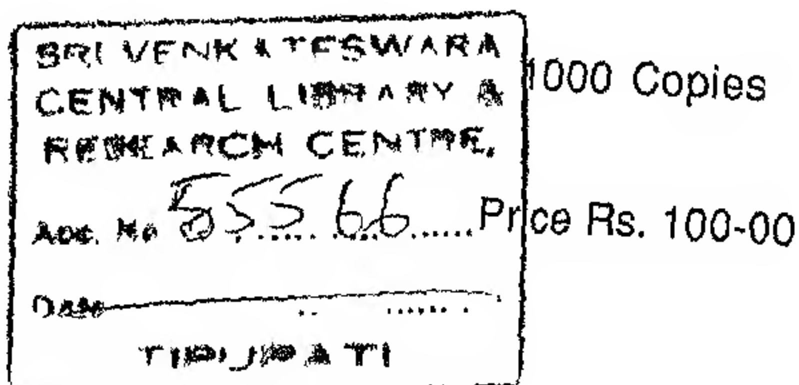
LATE DR. S. RANGACHAR

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Philosophy of Pancaratras (Agama Shastra). This Agama Shastra has been written by Late S. Rangachar and Published by Dr. M. N. Singaramma, Sridevi Prakashana, Mandya.



First Edition 1991



1000 Copies

Price Rs. 100-00

Books Available at :
Dr. M. N. Singaramma, 3018, 100 ft Road,
Nehru Nagar, Mandya-571 401
Phone - 20897

Printed at chanchu press (pvt) Ltd mysore

This book is published with the financial assistance of Tirumala Tirupathi Devastanam's under their scheme aid to publish religious books.



श्रियः काताय कल्याण निधये निधयेर्थिना
श्रीवेंकट निवासाय श्रीनिवासाय मंगळं

PREFACE

Late Dr. S. Rangachar, Reader, Bangalore University, Bangalore has written the great valuable and educative book " Philosophy of Pancaratras and other Agamas". This literature has been widely appreciated throughout our country as well as in other countries. Eminent scholars like Dr. Smith and other philosophers have expressed their appreciation about this book. I had translated this book in Kannada in 1982. The book became very famous and is now out of print. I take great pleasure in publishing this great book through Sridevi Prakashana, Mandya.

Dr. M. N. Singaramma

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Bhagavacchāstra Bhāskara, Pāñcarātragama
Jñāna Jyothi, Prathisthākushala
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Srimath Shāndilyādimahāgurubhyo Namaḥ

Srimathe Ramānujaya Namaḥ ·

FOREWORD

It is a well admitted fact that there are three Āgamās mainly followed by Hindus from ancient times. They are Vaiṣṇava, Śaiva and Śākta. The first is divided into two groups namely Pāñcarātra and Vaikhānasa.

As regards the general contents of Āgama literature the subject-matter is generally dealt with under four heads that is Jñāna, Yoga, Kriyā and Caryā.

1. **Jñān** : Knowledge which leads to release or mukti.
2. **Yoga** : Concentration or meditation on any subject.
3. **Kriyā** : Action - including all actions from laying the foundation of the temple to the completion of the sacred installation of the images therein.
4. **Caryā** : Performance of daily worship, other rites and festival rituals etc.

In many of the Pāñcarātra Samhithas the subject matter is divided into two heads only that is Jñāna Kāṇda and Kriya Kāṇda.

In most of the Āgama Samhithās the practical portion namely the Kriyā and Caryā sections are dealt with in great length.

The present work is a detailed study of the original texts of Pāñcarātra school of thought. The subject is highly philosophical.

Here the author claims that it is more inclined towards Visistadvaita than Advaita, though some of the doctrines of Pāñcarātra are suggestive of Advaita.

The landmarks of Pāñcarātra, the six qualities (guṇa), Supreme Brahman is Nārāyaṇa, the five-fold manifestation viz., Para, Vyuha, Vibhava, Antaryāmin and Archā, Evolution of soul and matter, the three realities (Tattvatraya) viz., Cit, Acit and Īśvara and Purusarthas (Dharma, Artha, Kāma and Mokṣā) are dealt with in detail in this work.

Now I am really glad to write a foreword for this worthy publication – "THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE PĀÑCARĀTRA AND OTHER ĀGAMĀS" being published by M/s Sridevi Prakashana of Mandya.

The editor and publisher Srimathi Sridevi is a wellknown scholar in Kannada, Hindi and Tamil languages. Her publications are more than 20 in Kannada, Hindi and Tamil on social, philosophical and religious themes. She has been honoured by many organisations and individuals for her unique contribution to the society.

As such, this publication is her maiden venture in English. I hope that this work written on Āgama will prove useful to scholars interested in understanding the spiritual philosophy behind the mode of worship of the Almighty. I pray to Lord Tirunarayana to bless the editor-publisher for serving interested scholars in India and abroad by publishing more such useful works in Āgama and Philosophy in future.

Date: 7-11-1990 Sampathkumara Bhattacharya



The Pancaratra Agamas are an age old tradition widely in practice, the philosophy of which is not much discussed, but simply taken for granted.

The Pancaratra Agamas are one of the most popular Agamas not only ancient but also widely prevalent particularly in the South India to begin with, and now very popular all over.

Of course, Otto Sehrader wrote an introduction to the Pancaratra and Ahirbudya Samhitha in the early weeks on this century. Since then I do not think much has been written of the Philosophy of Pancaratra. It was Prof. Yamunacharya who suggested to me the subject and the title research. "The Philosophy of Pancaratra." Some time during 1958 in one of his visits to Shimoga since then I took a keen interest in the subject. Prof. Yamunacharya now Director, Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi has been a guide and I am very grateful to him for his kind help and guidance in writing this thesis.

I have taken into account all Samhithas published so far whether in Devanagari or Tamil, Telugu scripts Mr. Sehrader has given a synopsis of the Samhitha list and according to his enumaration itself, the number of Samhithas runs to 210. Many more are yet to be discovered. I have not added any bibliographical note to the thesis is almost all the texts consulted are referred to in the body of thesis itself.

I owe a deep debt of gratitude to Prof. P. Javaregowda of Mysore University for all the valuable encouragement and help he gave to me for research I thank all of those who helped me in bringing this thesis successfully.

S. RANGACHAR

CONTENTS

THE AGAMAS

INDIAN philosophy is nothing but a versatile compendium of Dharma in all its ramifications and possible proliferations. To an Indian, whatever be the assumptions about the ultimate reality, whoever be the preceptor and whatsoever be the ultimate source of inspiration and knowledge, Dharma is essentially a way of life, a logical way of thinking, a genial way of feeling and a congenial way of willing not only for one's own individual well-being, but also for the *summum bonum* of his family, clan and society, for the weal and welfare of the whole of mankind at large, nay for the general well-being of the Universe as a whole with all its living and non-living beings. This well-known term Dharma is derived from the dhatu 'DHṚ' - which has three connotations.

a) D H Ā R A Ṇ A

b) P O Ṣ A Ṇ A

c) A V A S T H Ā N A

DHARMA is that which holds together the entire creation (the whole Universe), nurtures and sustains it and helps it to continue to be and perpetuate itself. Whatever be the system of thought, whether in conformity to the Vedas or in non-conformity, whether Vaidiki or Avaidiki, every Indian school of philosophy has emphasised Dharma one way or the other. It is this principle of Dharma that is the rendezvous of all the different schools of Indian thought. Philosophers may differ in their conclusions and convictions about the ultimate reality, they may say it is one or more than one or none at all, some may say the ultimate reality is a person, others may say it is an impersonal principle, they may have different ontologies and divergent epistemologies, they may employ or underline

different means of approach for the ultimate realisation whether Jñāna, Bhakti or Karma, they make talk through their hats whatever they like, but none of them have ever ignored Dharma. Dharma is the running cord in and through every philosophical system, on which all the beads of the different schools are strung and by which the entire necklace of Indian philosophy is held together and presented to the world as an invaluable jewel, immemorial, incorruptible, unfading, undying and rare . It is this Dharma that has given every school of Indian thought an undying fame and an authentic note. Philosophy in India whatever be its tinge or tone or tune, has never been a pure academic pursuit, an item of arm-chair thinking or intellectual pursuit for its own sake. Philosophies are born in India by the confrontation of dedicated men with evil, with the ills of life, philosophies are made to relieve mankind of their sorrows and sufferings, to show them a path of self-realisation, to lead them to permanent happiness unsullied even by temporary relapses. With this salutary end in view every one of the founders of the varying schools has in his repertoire a scheme of practice, a prescribed way of living, a dharma to put it in one word. Precept and practice have never been divorced. Each illustrious preceptor was in himself an illustration of his philosophical concepts and intellectual convictions. He was himself the exemplar of his teachings and the rest would follow suit. When once the destination was determined, the road of Dharma was immediately paved to reach the destination. It was smooth going for the followers as they were confident of their destinations and had absolute trust in the path-layers. Hence the watch word of Indian Culture and Philosophy is DHARMA which it has not been possible for any westerner to translate it into a single word of his language. This is exactly the distinction and cynosure of Indian thought.

' Dharmāt param nāsti ' - says the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanishad (1 - 4 - 14) . There is nothing beyond Dharma.

' Dharmo viśvasya jagataḥ pratishṭhā ' - The entire Universe is sustained on the foundation of Dharma. (Mahanarayana 2 - 6)

' Dharmännapramaditavyam ' - Taittiriya - (1 - 11 - 1). Let there be no neglect of Dharma.

' Dharma eva hato hanti - Dharmo rakshati rakshitaḥ (Manu - 8 - 15) Dharma is killed by the transgressor - The transgressor is ruined by himself in the process. He who protects Dharma, preserves himself therein.

The orthodox Hindu sincere to his heritage is of the conviction that the Vedas are the ultimate source and the true treasure-house of all Dharmas.

' Vedokhilo Dharmamū lam ' - (Manu - 2-6).

' Vedo Dharmamūlam ' - (Gautama Dharma Sūtra - 1) .

' Upadishto Dharmaḥ prativedam ' - (Bodhāyana Dharma Sutra - 1). Dharma is the means (Ķarana, Sadhana) to acquire true knowledge.

Harita Maharshi has pronounced :-

Athāto Dharmam Vyākhyāsyāmah I
Ś ruti pramaṇako Dharmaḥ I
Śrutisca dvividhā
Vaidikì tantrikí ca -

Śruti the revealed truths are two-fold in character -Vaidikī and Tantrikī . As Yaksa the well-known commentator on the Vedas says ' Mantra drashtaro ṛiṣayaḥ ' - The sages are those who have seen the revealed truths. That is why the original preceptors are called Seers. Honest Hindus believe that the Srutis are 'Āptạvacana ' - truths revealed, the testimony of God Himself than whom a better well-wisher (*apta*) cannot be even surmised. The renowned commentator on Manuś Dharma Sastra says :-

' Vaidikī tantrikī caiva dvividhā śrutiḥ kīrtitā ' - So God's primeval revelations to mankind (ŚRUTI) are two-fold, namely Vedic and Tantric. Just as the vedas are considered to be the Śrutis, the Tantras are also taken to be the Srutis themselves.

' VedaŚāstram ' - (Manu-12-99).

' Śrutistu Vedo vijñema '- (Manu - 2-10).

Just as the pulses reveal a binary fission when broken, so also the Śrutis when probed into and understood reveal the two parts of the Vedas and the Tantras, - it is presumed. Sometimes the Vedas and the Tantras, the Nigamas and the Agamas are compared to that legendary bird, Gaṇḍabheruṇḍa which has two necks with faces contained in one and the same body.

Often in ancient Indian lore we meet with the terms, Śruti, Veda, Āgama and Āmnāya almost as synonyms with an interchangeable import (As paryāyavācakas). In the context of explaining Vedic terms we find references made as - ' Ityāgamāt '. Similarly in the course of explaining Tantric doctrines, we come across references made as - ' Iti Śruteḥ ' .

It is unfortunate to find that sometimes some people look down on the very word ' Tantra ' as though it means something crooked, something undesirable, as though it is unbecoming of honest beings and something of a subterfuge and resorting to cheap if not reprehensible means of gaining one's end. This kind of view is uncalled for. Before delving into the meaning and significance of the Tantra Sastras, it is necessary to know the exact meaning of the very term 'Tantra' itself. The Mediṇīkoṣa kāra says :-

' Tantram kuṭumbakṛtye syāt siddhānte ca auṣadhottame -

Pradhāne tantuvāye ca śastrabhede paricchade.

Śrutiśākhāntare hetāvubhayārtha prayojake -

Iti kartavyatāyām ca'.

The word 'Tantra' has different meanings. It may mean any of the following: Family-protection, an established system, the best medicine, the most important or the outstanding, a spider, the corollaries of any system of thought, a branch of vedic knowledge, a thing that may serve double purposes, or that which prescribes a particular way of doing a thing. In popular

parlance Tantra may mean a know-how; Often Tantra Sastra is characterised as a 'Prayoga Sastra' - a spiritual technique, a religious technology, a ' Do-it-yourself ' Sastra for the aspirants. Often Tnatriki Śruti is called a Siddhanta Agama, a Sādhana Sastra. Amarasimha says

' Tantriko jñatasiddhantaḥ ' -

He means thereby that Tantra is Siddhanta - an established system of knowledge and practices. He who is well-versed in the Siddhanta is called a Tantrika. The different established systems of thought such as the Mimamsa, Nyaya, Vaiseshika usually delineated as Darsanas are also often referred to as Tantras. For instance Sankara in his Brahma Sutra Bhashya (3. 3. 53), while commenting on Purvamimamsa Darsana refers to it in the style - Prathama-tantre - thereby implying that Darsana and Tantra are interchangeable terms. Often great scholars are conferred with the title 'Sarvatantra Svatantra' extolling their erudition and mastery of the Sastras. If Manu could call the Vedas 'Veda Śastra, - Veda Śastram sanātanam (12-99), the Tantras can be called 'Siddhanta Sastra' with equal force. For instance Sankara calls Samkhya, a Tantra. Why , the Sāmkhya Karika does so itself, by calling its own Darsana a Tantra in Karika - 70.

There is of course the long-standing controversy whether the Vedas are really ' Apaurusheya - Authorless' - While the orthodox Hindus believe so, indologists both eastern and western are of the opinion that the authors of the Vedas may be assigned various dates upto 1500 B.C. Recent excavations at Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro and also Tilak's researches have pushed back the origin of the Vedas by many thousands of years. I do not wish to enter into the controversy whether the Vedas are Apāurusheya or Pāurusheya. The point relevant here is that the Srutis lose their claim as revealed literature. If the Vedas have their authors, then the Tantras will have to have their authors. These very same indologists are of the opinion that the Agamas and Tantras are of later origin than the Vedas and that they are definitely later than the Purāṇas. They are of the

further opinion that the Purāṇas themselves are newly created Post-Buddhistic literature specially formulated in such a way as to offset Buddhistic influences and boost Hinduism If that is so Tantric literature is to be considered as of very late origin and cannot be deemed as *pari passu* with the Vedas as claimed earlier in terms of the accredited convictions of the orthodox schools.

The above argument of the Indologists that the Tantras are of recent origin later to the Purāṇas, can be easily refuted by pointing out that in the various Purāṇas themselves we find mention made both of the Vaidiki and Tantriki forms of worship.

So also the allegation that the Tantras are of Post-Buddistic origin can be easily refuted. Lord Buddha himself condemned the Tantric worships of Brahma, Indra, Viṣṇu, Kātyāyini, Gaṇapati and others. Lalitavistāra, a great Buddhistic work, makes mention of Buddha's denouncement of Tantric cults in its 17th chapter. After Buddha, we find Buddhists themselves began to have their own innumerable Tantras. They veritably began to worship innumerable deities such as Ādibuddha, Prajñāpāramita, Manjūśrī, Tārā, Ārya- Tārā and so on . In other words Buddhists could not resist the temptations of having their own Tantras on the lines similar to those of the Hindus.

Thus if Buddha could denigrate Tantric worship, the Tantras should have existed earlier to Buddhism.

Quite in contrast with the considered opinion of the Indologists, one of the Tantras themselves, namely the Narāyāṇīya Tantra points out that the Vedas themselves have originated from the YĀMALĀS, a class of Tantras of considerable importance and also magnitude. The principal Yamalas are eight in number namely:

Rudra Yāmala
Kanda (skanda) Yāmala
Brahma Yāmala

Viṣṇu Yāmala

Yama Yāmala

Vāyu Yāmala

Kubera Yāmala

Indra Yāmala.

Just as the original Siva Tantras or Agamas represent the Rudra or Sadasiva tradition, the Yāmalas represent the BHAIRAVA tradition and it is further narrated that the Yāmalas were first communicated to mankind by the following eight Bhairavas:

Svacchanda,

Krodha,

Unmatta,

Ugra and Kapalin

Jhankāra,

Śekhara,

Vijaya.

The Yāmala tradition believes in a huge pantheon of gods and goddesses. Tantric Sadhana is open to all castes.

It is believed that the Rigveda has originated from Rudra Yāmala, Sama Veda from the Brahma Yāmala, Yajur Veda from Vishnu Yāmala and Ahtarva Veda from the Sakti Yāmala.

Siddha Sarvānanda in his compendium called Sarvollāsa Tantra means to convey the idea that the Yāmalas are so ancient that they precede even the Tāntras. All these of course are highly controversial issues. According to Brahma Yamala it is believed Isvara communicated the secret knowledge to Srīkantha. This Srikantha reincarnated himself near Prayag and communicated the Tantra in 1,25,000 anushtubh slokas to various disciples and that one of those disciples was a Bhairava and that that was how many Bhairavas came to know of it.

According to Mahā-Siddhasāra Tantra, Bharatavarsha is divided into three KRĀNTAS or sub-divisions and each Krānta is said to possess 64 Tantras. The three KRĀNTAS are :

Vishnu Krānta

Ratha Krānta

Asva Krānta.

Saktimangala Tantra defines the Krāntas.

i) The land east of the Vindhya hills extending upto JAVA comprises Vishnu Krānta.

ii) The country north of Vindhya hills including mainland CHINA forms Ratha Krānta.

iii) Rest of India westwards is Asva Krānta.

Hindu temples could be found in Indo China, Indonesia, Bali and many other islands. Images of Kāli, Tāra, Rudra could be found all over the far east and south -east Asia.

Even Egypt came under Asva Krānta and worship of the Indian phallus was very popular there. In the Bṛihannila Tantra it is said worship of Paramananda was in vogue in Persia. In Rhodesia phallic emblems made of gold have been discovered. The worship of ASHTAROTH, ASTARTE, ISHTAR referred to in the Old Testament of the Bible is interpreted to be none other than the Bījāksara - 'STRĪM' - the bīja of TĀRA. Thus it is evident that Tantric worship was widely prevalent in ancient times in many parts of the world other than India even and that Indian influence was all over Asia, Africa and the middle east too. The Shat-Sambhava-Rahasya mentions 4 famous Sampradāyas of Bharata - 4 famous schools very popular all over-

Gauda in the east

Kelara in the middle

Kāshmīra in the west

Vilāsa - all over (an eclectic Sampradaya). Whether we agree with the view or not that the Vedas themselves have their source in the Yamalas, we can atleast be convinced that the Tantras are of very ancient origin and that they are not post-puranic or post-buddhistic literature.

There is then another insinuation against the Tantras namely that the Agamas and Tantras represent a revolt against the Vedas. The objectioners quote the Bhagavadgita sometimes, stanzas 45 and 46 in Canto II. In the same Bhagavadgita Canto X, stanza 22 Krishna says -

" Of the Four Vedas, I am the Sāmaveda " - Again in Canto XV Stanza No. 15 Krishna says - " I am the Truth which all the Vedas seek to know. The author of the Vedānta (the Upanishads) am I ; And I too am the real Knower of the Vedas " -

Sometimes it is argued that the Tantras cannot be on a par with the Vedas for the simple reason that in many places black magic is described in the Tantras, that in some parts they contain obscenities and that therefore they are not of good taste. In reply we may raise the question - what about the Vedas themselves?

Manu says - (11 - 33)

Srutiratharvāngirasīḥ kuryadityavicārayan I

Vak śastram Vai Brāhmaṇsya tena hanyādarin dvijaḥ II-

On certain occasions a brahmin can undoubtedly make use of the Atharvaveda. A brahmin's strength lies in his tongue (Vak) meaning thereby Mantra. To overcome an enemy a brahmin is permitted to resort to the practices enjoined in the Atharvaveda. The following Suktas directly deal with black Arts and Magic in the Atharvaveda. .

First	Khanda	-	Suktas	-	14-17
Second	"		"		17-31
Third	"		"		25-30
Fourth	"		"		12-16-36

Fifth	Khanda	Suktas	14-23-27
Sixth	"	"	37-105-130

Even in Rigveda and Yajurveda there are references to 'Abhicāra Kṛtya ' Black Arts and Magic. Reference :

ṚGVEDA	-	Eighth Aṣṭaka	
"	-	Tenth Maṇḍala 14th Sūkta.	
"	-	"	16th Sūkta.
"	-	"	163rd Sūkta.
"	-	"	58-60 Sūkta.
YAJURVEDA	-	Taittīrya Brahmaṇa	
		Kāṇḍa - 2 Pra - 4 Anu - 2	

To make a sweeping remark that all Tantras teach Black Art and nothing else is wrong and smacks of an unwarranted hasty generalisation and bad faith. There may be separate Tantras exclusively meant for Black arts and they are exclusively known by their distinctive appellations such as Gāruda, Dak ṣiṇa, Vāma, Bhūta etc.

" Athābhicārah śatrūṇām vedadharmadruhāṃ smṛtā ḥ "

If the Vedas themselves could advocate and enunciate a few items of black arts to bring couples together or punish the enemies of the Vedic brahmins, why should any one denounce an assemblage of Tantras most of which do not even touch upon the black arts or magic or any such thing. When we take into consideration any discourse on creation in the Vedas, we can easily observe similarity of views between the Vaidiki and Tāntriki srutis.

Ṛigveda : 10 - 90

" Tasmādyajñatsarvahutaḥ ṛcaḥ sāmāni jajñire " -

Atharveda : 10 . 7 . 14

"Yatra ṛṣayah prathamajā ṛcah

Samayajurmahi ekarshi yasmi -

Unapitah skambham tam bruhi
Kathamassmi devasah " .

Every one is aware of the Panca Brahma Mantras beginning with 'Sadyojātam prapadyāmi ' and ending with 'Iśānaḥ sarva vidyānām ' - To understand the Panca Brahma mantras, we have to know clearly about the Pancasadakhyas. So also about the mantras such as 'Adhvarāmadhvapate ' etc. - To understand the significance of these mantras it is absolutely necessary to have recourse into the Āgamas. Otherwise it is impossible. The Brahma Svarūpa as suggested in the Vaidiki srutis is clearly explained and illustrated in the Tāntriki srutis.

So also there is close association and mutual substantiation between the Brāhmaṇas of the Vaidiki srutis and the Tāntriki srutis. For instance in Arsheya Brāhmaṇa : (Arsheya - 1)

" Yo-hava aviditarṣeyacchando daivatabrāhmaṇena mantreṇa yajayati va adhyapayati va Sthāṇum Vārcchati-gartan vā pratipadyate " -

The same idea that not knowing the Riṣi, Chandas and Daivata viniyoga of any Mantra if a person instructs or practises a Yantra worship he is sure to be a sinner only - is expressed in the Agamas also-

" Aviditvā Ṛṣim Chando Daivatam Yogamevaca ".

Yo adhyāpayed japedvāpi papīyan jāyate tusaḥ " -

That is why it is often said about the Tantras, ' Śruti - śākhāviśeṣaḥ ' a distinctive branch of the Srutis. Rooted in the Srutis, it is classed with the Vedas.

In the Kaśikavṛtti, the word Tantra is derived from the root 'TAN ' - which means ' to spread'- some later scholars have derived it from the root ' TATRI ' or ' Tantri ' meaning 'Origination' or knowledge. In a special sense Tantra is defined as :

" Tanyate Vistāryate Jñānam anena iti " -that which amplifies and nurtures knowledge. Tantra is that branch of knowledge that not only enlarges and illustrates, but also sustains Srutijñāna.

In Kāmikāgama it is stated about the Tantras :

" Tanoti vipulānarthān tattvamantra samanvitān,

Trāṇanca kurute yasm ā t tantram ityabhidhīyate ".

Not only does Tantra promulgate profound knowledge concerning Tattva (Cosmic principles) and Mantra (the science of mystic sounds), it breathes life into them so to say and makes them practicable. It helps in true practical realisation the greatness of the Tantras and Mantras. It helps in self-realisation through self-elevation so to say.

One of the oldest Tantras, the Nisvasa tantra Samhita is of the view that Tantra is just a culmination of the esoteric aspects of Vedanta and Samkhya for the reason that it upholds the ultimacy of Siva with the validity of the world as an expression of His Sakti. Siva, the supreme Lord is said to have taught his consort first the Vedanta, then the twentyfive Samkhya tattvas and finally Siva tantra. Pingalamata, another tantric text says that Tantra was first communicated by Siva to Parvati. It is Agama with the characteristics of Chandas (Vedas). Kularnava Tantra (II 140-41) says that kuladharma is based on and inspired by the truth of the Vedas. This Tantra says that there is no knowledge (vidya) higher than that of the Vedas and no doctrine (Darsana) equal to Kaula - ' Na hi Vedadhika vidya ' - III - 113. Prapancasara cites Vaidiki mahavakyas and mantras. Meru Tantra says, as mantras are part of the Vedas, Tantra is also a part of the vedas (Pranatoshini - 70). Niruttara Tantra calls Tantra the fifth Veda and Kulacara the fifth Asrama (Pranatoshini). Kularnava tantra reiterates that the Sastras have as their heart both the Veda and the Kaula tantra -

" Tasmadvedatmakansastran Viddhi Kaulatmakan , priye - (II 140-141). Matsyamukha mahātantra says that the Tantric disciple must be pure of soul (Suddhatma) and a knower of the

Vedas. Knowledge of the Vedas is an essential preliminary to initiation into the Tantric cult. Maharudra Yamala says that a person bereft of Vedic Kriya - 'Vedakriya Vivarjita' is disqualified for the study and practice of Tantric Sadhana (Maharudra Yamala - Khanda I , Chap. 15. Khanda II, Chapt. 2; Pranatoshini - 108). Gandharva Tantra (Chapt. 2; Pranatoshini - 6) says that the Tantric sadhaka must be an astika, a believer in the Vedas, ever attached to Brahman, ever speaking of Brahman, living in Brahman and taking shelter in Brahman. That Hinduism is revealed in the six darshanas is a well-known fact. The six darshanas are the six stages through which the mind progressess in its quest for Brahman. The six darshanas are the six limbs. These six systems are not to be treated separately. They must be taken together as darsana is not a philosophy as such, but only a view point. Tantra is precisely a darsana and a sadhana sastra. In general it lays down different forms of practice for the attainment of the highest aim of human existence by one living the ordinary life of a house-holder. In this respect Tantra corresponds to the Upasana Khanda of the Sruti. The Tantras are classified under five heads namely:

Saiva
Sakta
Vaishnava
Saura and
Gānapatya.

These five classes of worshippers are collectively called PANCOPASAKAS. Each class of worshippers has its own tantras. In Mahanirvana tantra, I. 18, 19, II.8 - 15, III. 72, the Mantra ' Aum Saccidekam Brahma' is stated and Tantra is acclaimed as a darsana.

As already stated the term 'Tantra' is derived from the root 'TAN' to spread. It means a system, a method a discipline. It helps in achieving two ends, namely

i. Abhyudaya - General progress or uplift,

ii. Nihareyasa- Attaining the supreme god namely salvation or liberation

Tantra may aptly be described as Sadhana reduced to a science. The Siddhi achieved is a demonstrable fact, experimentally verified. Tantra not only helps in achieving the supreme end of self-realisation and liberation but also helps to achieve the ordinary ends of living existence such as Dharma, Artha and Kama. The Tantra Sastra is based on the firm convictions that ' Mantra ' is efficacious, that 'Yantra ' is potent and that ultimate siddhi at the level of Saccidananda - ' Being - consciousness - bliss ' - is a certainty. It helps in the co-ordination of Karma, Yoga, Jnana and Bhakti. Although it emphasises will and effort on the part of the individual sadhaka, it glorifies self-surrender to the Almighty and seeking His mercy and grace. It demands Bhakti and Prapatti, yearning love of the votary, the upasaka. The Tantric sadhana employs both the exoteric rituals of the Vedic type and the esoteric rituals of the Yogic type. The Tantras just simplify the Vedic rituals and make greater use of esoteric symbols. We know the esoteric symbolism was evident even in the Brahmanas and Upanishads . Ex: Satapatha Brahmaṇa I. 3. 2-3. The same account is repeated in the opening verses of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad also. The Tantras place greater emphasis on the esoteric sacrifice. So we need not hesitate to say that the Tantras have emerged from the Vedic religion and sacrifices.

In the vast reservoir of ancient Hindu learning and Knowledge there are the Vedas, the Smritis, the Itihasas and the Puranas. Each by itself is very extensive in its literature. In addition to these we have a vast store of Tāntric literature in the well-known five forms namely Bouddha, Jaina, Sakta, Saiva and Pancaratra. These are also known as ' Agamas' literally meaning 'additions' - as distinguished from Vedic literature. The orthodox theory is that the Vedic precepts and directives are amplified, explained and illustrated by the Agamas, Smritis and Puranas including the Itihasas and that there could be no possible

contradiction between them. Even if some apparent conflicts are to be met with, it is held by the ' astikas that they could be explained away by the established rules of exegetics applicable to the Vedic literature itself and detailed in the Mimamsas

Etymologically Veda is defined as ' Vedayatiti Vedah' - that which enlightens (on God).

The Agamas are in the same etymological way defined as :

' Asamantat gamayatiti agamah' - that which enlightens on God in a practical way.

Smriti is defined as :

' Smaranukulatvat smritih' -

' Srutim munayah amaranti ca tatha vidham' -

' Sruterivartham amritiranvagacchat'

- (Raghuvamsa - II. 2).

The Smritis are just another class of literature that help to remember the ' Srutis' in a practical and convenient way, that follow the lines of the Srutis. Any Smriti antagonistic to the Srutis is held invalid.

Manu says:

' Yah kascitkasyaciddharmo manuna parikirtitah.

'Sa sarvo abhihito vede sarvajnanamayohi sah.

'Sarvam tu samavekshyedam nikhilam jnana cakshusha.

' Sruti pramanyato vidvan svadharme nivisceta vai.'

Manu II - 7-8.

The Smritis give us a dharmasastra, helps us to attain abyudaya and nihsreyasa - ' Tasmat sastram pramanam te karyakarya vyavasthitau

About the Puranas,

In Vayu Purana it is said :

' Yasmat purahyanatiti puranam tena hi smritam.'

' Niruktamasya yo veda sarva papaih pramucyate'.

Purana embodies within itself the happenings of the past. Those who are aware of them get rid of all their demerits.

In Matsya Purana it is said :

' Puratanasya kalpasya puranani vidurbudhah' -

The learned call them as Puranas as they enlighten us on the past and the ancient.

Panini defines Purana as :

' Purabhavam Puranam' -

They are just the testimony of the past.

' Atha puranam nama visvasya purvavasthanirupakam Vyasadi Muni pranitam pancalakshananvitam sastram ' -

Itihasa is simply annotated as :

'Iti - ha - asa ' - ' It was so ' -

It is just a descriptive analysis.

Now the point at issue is smritis, puranas and itihasas, they all depend for their validity and authenticity on the Vedas.

' Itihasa Puranabhyam Vedam samupabrimhayet.

'Bibhetyalpa srutadvedo mamayam praharitashyati '.

The Vedas must be properly explained with the aid of the Puranas and Itihasas. When these are there to expatiate on the Vedas, how can they at all go against the Vedas or deviate from them ?

The two, Agamas and Nigamas are the twin foundations of Indian culture. Like two channels drawn from a reservoir of water for purposes of irrigation, the Vedagamas are the twin channels by which we secure aparoksha jnana of God. Nigamagama are similar to ghata-kalasa revealing avinabhava sambandha. Both the Nigamas and the Agamas are taken to be revealed literature - apaurusheya. They are not human compositions, but revealed by God. If the Vedas are the breath of God (Nihsvasarupa), the Agamas are his words (Vanirupa). They are both God given (Isvara pranita) and similar in views

(samanartha bodhaka). - Both possess within themselves self-validity - (svatah pramanya) and the two are therefore called 'Sruti' - 'Samamnaya rupa'. That is why Agama is called Bhagavat Sastra. It is often alluded to as ' Mantra-Tantra samuccaya ' - the jewel-box of knowledge containing within itself mantra and tantra, theory and practice. It is the Sastra *sui generis* that requires the help of no other Sastra.

In one of the Agamas it is narrated as follows :

Parvati, the consort of Siva questioned him:

" Who will listen to the Smritis in the Kaliyuga when people ignore the rituals enjoined by the Vedas, and when Sanatana Dharma is going to dogs? Where is the love for the Puranas and the Itihasas? How to resuscitate Dharma that is in ruins everywhere?"

Siva is said to have replied:

" When the Srutimarga loses its hold on the masses in the Kaliyuga, the Agamodita (Tantrodita) pathways of Mantra come to the fore as they are of quick yielding results".

Therefore it is held universally that the Agamas (since they predominantly contain tantric practices, they are also called Tantrasastra) are the lingua franca of religions and spiritual practices for the Kali age (the present times).

' Agamokta vidhanena devan yajet sudhih' -

' Kalau agamamullanghya yo anya margam pravartate '

' Na tasya gatirastiti satyam satyam na samsayah'.

Apart from the Agama practices none else are deserving of consideration in the Kaliyuga. - This is the truth - There is no doubt about this.

' Jagati nijakarmapasa baddhan utpatti marana pravaha
patitan samsara sindhum taritu makshaman'

' Jantun uddhartum paramakarunikah Sivaya upavarnitah
(upadishtah) agamah iti' -

Just to save the people in the world who cannot reach the shores being caught up in the ocean of Samsara and tied up by the knots of ajnana, Siva preached the Agamas to the world (through Parvati).

' Agatam sivavaktrabja dgatantu Girijasrutau '

' Tadagama iti proktam sastram paramapavanam'

' Agatam Sivavaktrebhyah gatantu Girijasrutau'

' Matam ca Vasudevasya tasmad-agama-mucyate' -

Agamas are those that came out of the lips of Siva and conveyed to Parvati.

' Srishtisca pralayascaiva devanam ca tatharcanam'

' Sadhanamcaiva sarvesham purascaranamevaca'

' Shatkarma sadhanam caiva jnanayoga caturvidhah' -

' Saptabhih lakshanairyuktam tu agamam tadvidoviduh'.

The wise know that the Agamas consists of the following seven topics:

i. Process of creation
ii. Dissolution of the Universe
iii. Worship of God according to prescribed rules.
iv. Rules of propitiating all deities.
v. The practice of Purascaranam.
vi. The six practices - Shatkarma.
vii. The fourfold dhyanayoga – Yoga of meditation.

' Na samhitadyauh smritibhih ishtasiddhih nrunam bhavet'

' Satyam satyam punah satyam satyam satyam mayocyate'.

'Vina agamamargena Kalau nasti gatih priye'

' Sruti Smriti Puranadau mayaivoktam pura Sive '

' Agamokta vidhanena Kalau devan bhajet sudhih' -

" I assert it is the whole truth and nothing but the truth, that the fulfilment of men's desired object is not possible through Samhitas and Smritis. In Kaliyuga, there is no liberation, oh dear one, without resorting to Agamas. The wise in Kaliyuga should

always worship God according to the mandates as laid down by the Agamas .' - so says Siva to Parvati when questioned about the means of self- realisation for men in Kaliyuga.

' Siddham siddhaih pramanaistu hitam vatraparatraca agamam sastram aptanam iti '-

Agamas are meant for the chosen. They are meant for their well-being both here and in the hereafter.

'Āptoktirāgamah ' -

Agamas are the valid testimony of the Aptas - reliable well-wishers.

' Aptoktiratra siddhantah Siva eva aptimanyatah'

' Na tabhyam sadrisah kascicchreya apti vidhayakah ' -

' Siddhanta eva siddhantah purvapakshastatah pare '

' Aptostu Siva evaikah sivanyetva sivamatah'

' Siddhantah sevyate sadbhih sakti pala pavitritaih'

' Kamikaritayȧ anyaistu nindyate pasusastravat' -

The agamas are cherished by the wise and the good although they might be denounced by the vulgar.

In Sarada Tilaka it is thus said that Agama is what is told by Paramesvara by his tongue to Parvati. Even in other Samhitas and Mantra sastras the same ideas are supported and is said that the Sastra spelled out by Paramesvara to Parvati and to the satisfaction of Vishnu in the form of Vasudeva is Agama .

' Asamantat gamayati dharmadharmau parampadam'

' Agamastena kathita iti Veda vidoviduh'.

' Anena avagamyate sarvam iti agamah' -

Agama is considered to be the elixir of all knowing. It helps in the understanding of everything of the Sastras.

In Harita Smriti it is stated, just as a bird cannot fly with one wing only (on one side) but requires two, on both sides so also for an individual to attain liberation jnana and kriya are both required.

' Dvabhyameva hi pakshabhyam yatha vai pakshinam gatih'

' Tathaiva jnanakarmabhyam prapyate Brahmasasvatam'

The Dharma Sastras always follow the Agamas. Smritis like govatsanyaya always follow the Vaidiki srutis in the same way as they follow the Tantriki sruti. ' Dharmasastram tu vai smritihi'-

There can never be any disparity between the Srutis (whether Vaidiki or Tantriki) and the Dharma Sastras or Smritis. Apasthambha when he prepared the Dharma sastras to enlighten the masses on Srouta Siddhanta refers to them as ' Amnayaih aviruddhah pramanam ' - They can never dream of departing from the Srutis.

The Vedanta has in its treasure trove the famous thirty two Brahmavidyas as possible means of God realisation, such as Pancagni vidya, Vaisvanaravidya, Daharavidya , Akshipurusha vidya and so on . These vidyas are only in theory and they are very difficult of practice in these days. These same Brahmavidyas have been taken over by the Agamas and made easy for practice under different titles. They have all been absorbed and amplified in Agamic worship. That was why even Samkaracharya in spite of having established Advaita philosophy, propounded the six matas, schools of worship namely cults for the adoration of Vishnu, Siva, Sakti, Vinayaka, Subramanya and Surya. The Agamas have enriched vedic rituals in a simple and dignified way, have added yoga and bhakti to worship, enriched the store of Mantras with novel types of Saiva, Sakta and Vaishnava mantras and streamlined worship in an elegant way to the needs and capacities of the modern man. That is why for the past hundreds of years the vedic sacrifices or yajnas have largely been replaced by rituals of temple worship based on the agamas. Even vedic rituals and rituals of vedic worship at domestic fire-altars of the ancient Aryans have given place largely to worship and rituals in terms of the traditions and teachings of the Agamas. In both instances of temple and

domestic worship there are to be found certain elements of sacrificial rituals of the ancient Aryans of the Vedic period. Yet the living faith of the present Hindus is primarily dominated by Agamic traditions and definitely and mostly based on the Agamas - Saiva, Śakta or Vaishnava which inculcate the worship of Siva, Sakti or Vishnu through images and symbols consecrated and established in temples and even in house-holds according to their respective agamic traditions.

The late P.T. Srinivasa Iyengar says : " The agamas like the upanishads were the ultimate development of the Brahmanas though they contained other elements besides. Hence the followers of the Agama schools sought to prove their orthodoxy by interpreting the Upanishads in accordance with their own tenets. They even gave the name of Samhita to them as also the name Smriti thus indicating the claim to be what they really were based on and regularly evolved from tradition. This movement gave birth to most of the later Upanishads which unlike the earlier ones do not denominate the supreme being. Param Brahma but are exclusively Vaishnava, Sākta and Saiva in their tone and are probably in many cases but agamas under the name of Upanishads. Many of the Agamas themselves are called Upanishads though not included in the recognised 108 " .

There are in fact many Vaishnava, Sakta and Saiva upanishads with the commentary of Upanishad Brahma Yogin.

Although the Nigamas or the Vedas are venerated and held in high esteem by all the Hindus as self-revealed Sruti, in actual practice the routine living religion and temple worship of the modern and contemporary Hindu is essentially permeated by agamic traditions and based on the agamic sastras.

In fact Agama as such, whatever be its denomination is fundamentally a sadhana sastra, the science of self-realisation for the benefit of the votaries, the sadhakas or the upasakas. Every agama whether Saiva, Sakta or Vaishnava prescribes a particular way of life and a practical course of self-discipline in conformity with the theoretical teachings of its philosophy. No

longer is the votary to appeal to innumerable vedic deities; no longer is the votary in barter deal with the Gods of the Vedas, no longer is the encumbered with the botheration of performing laborious sacrifices with innumerable men and materials of offerings to Gods; no longer is the in commerce with a vague brahman, saguna or still worse nirguna. He is in definite concourse with a monotheistic all-powerful God, a Vishnu or a Siva or even with the primordial Sakti. Caste distinctions are struck at the root. At the same time worship is not given up altogether. Rituals are performed in temples in public or in private in homes. The moorings in the vedas, the Nigamas are not altogether given up. The agamas in general claimed to be based on the Nigamas or the Veda.

P.T. Srinivasa Iyengar further says: " The influence of the agamas or tantras as they are more familiarly known in Indian life has been profound. The living Hindu religion of to-day from Cape Comorin to the remotest corners of Tibet is essentially Tantric. Even the few genuine vedic rites that are preserved and are supposed to be derived straight from the Vedas namely the Sandhya, have been modified by the addition of Tantric practices. Equally profound has been the influence of the agamas on the development of Vedanta philosophy. Samkara was a profound Sakta and his Advaita exposition of the Vedanta though overtly independent of the Saktagamas is influenced by Tantric theories and his discipline by Tantric practices. Ramanuja who according to Thibavt expounds a less forced form of Vedanta and more near to the ideas of Badarayana, the author of the Vedanta Sutras than Samkara was a Vaishnava and regarded the Vaishnava agamas as authoritative, though he seldom quotes them to support his exposition. Madhva is too much under the agama influence that his Bhashya is but a string of agama texts with a few words thrown in here and there to connect them."

The Agama literature is generally treated as esoteric, as a 'Rahasya' a secret or occult science. It is generally presumed there are 108 Pancaratra agamas, 28 Saiva agamas and 77 Sakta

agamas. These Saiva, Sakta and Vaishnava agamas have further sub-divisions called Upagamas.

So far as the general content of the Agama is concerned, the subject matter is generally dealt with under four heads namely:

i. Jnana : Knowledge about Release or Moksha.

ii. Yoga : Concentration on the subject of Jnana.

iii. Kriya : Action: including all actions from laying the foundations of the temples to completion of the sacred edifice, installation and consecration of images in the temple according to prescribed rituals.

iv. Ćaryā : Performance of daily worship, other rites, rituals and festivals etc. according to prescribed methods. This is the general outlay or plan in every Samhita. Varying emphasis is laid on these four padas or sections in the general plan. In most of the Samhitas predominance is given to the last two sections. the practical portions of kriya and carya padas. They are dealt with in great detail.

Whatever be the affiliations of an Agama whether to Siva, Vishnu or Sakti, there are certain salient features common to all the Agamas as such. They may be enumerated as follows :

i. Belief in a Supreme being. - a monotheistic God.

ii. Belief in the existence and reality of the individual souls.

iii. Belief in the objective existence of the Universe as such.

The above three are usually designated the triple Tattvas, the three postulates of the Agamas. Though the different schools of Agamas may give different names to these three Tattvas, every Agama school takes them for granted, presupposes them.

THE PANCARATRA-ITS RELATION TO SRUTIS AND SMRUTIS

IN THE Satapatha Brahmana XIII, 6.1.1. reference is made to Pancaratra Shastra 'Sa yetam purushamedham pancaratram Yajnakratum apasyat' -

In the Chandogya Upanishad VII, 1.2 reference is made to EKAYANA which is none other than Pancaratra.

' Rigvedam bhagavah adhyemi , Yajurvedam Samavedam , -Atharvanam caturtham, Itihasa - Puranam pancamam, Vedanam Vedam, Pitryam, Rasim, Daivam, Nidhim, Vako-vakyam, Ekayanam. " Venerable Sir, I have learnt the Rigveda, the Yajurveda, the Samaveda, Atharvana the fourth veda, the epic and the ancient lore. . . . . and Ekayana " - Here Ekayana is taken to mean Pancaratra.

In the Ramayana, Uttarakhanda, Sarga 7 , verse 16, reference to Pancaratra is made as follows :

' Puranaiscaiva vedaisca pancaratraih tathaiva ca '

'Dhyayanti yogino nityam kratubhisca yajanti tam'.

The yogins adore the Lord in the Puranas vedas and the Pancaratras also.

The whole section of the Santiparva in the Mahabharata is called the Narayaniya. In Santiparva (348-62-63) it is stated :

" Idam mahopanishadam caturvedasamanvitam "

Sāmkhyayoga kritantena pancaratranusabditam.

Narayanamukhodgirnam (tam) Narado sravayat pura.

Narada heard of yore this great Pancaratra voiced forth by Narayaṅa Himself, on a par with the four vedas and properly called

'Mahopanishad, Upanishad the great.

Pancaratra is frequently referred to as Bhagavat-Sastra. Narayana Himself is considered to be the first enunciator and author.

' Caturvedasamanvitam pancaratranusabditam
mahopanishadam idam '
Bhaktanukampaya bhagavata Harina samgrahitam '.

God Himself has collected and collated the Pancaratra Sastra which can be titled as a great Upanishad, similar to or on a par with the four vedas in commensuration for the devotees.

God, the Supreme is called Para Brahma or Bhagavat. This Para Brahma or Bhagavat is none other than Vasudeva. Panini has given the famous Sutra -

' Vasudevarjunabhyam WUN' iti - ' Vasudevaradhakanam sadbharasya tadetat jnapakamiti - Na Vasudeva - sutam Krishna iti' Vasudeva need not refer to the Krishna of the Gita only, son of Vasudeva. It refers to the ultimate reality according to the significance of the 'WUN' pratyaya. WUN - pratyaya is taken to mean - 'Bhagavat - samjneyamiti - It is the symbol of Bhagavat, the supreme God. In Sribhashya - 2 - 2 - 41 it is referred to as :

' Taddhi Vasudevakhyam param Brahma yat ' -

In Rahasyatrayasara (Arthapancakadhikara) , Sri Nigamanta Guru has proved with reason as follows :

' Prapyasya Brahmanorupam Praptusca Pratyagatmanah '
'Praptyupayam phalam prapte statha Praptivirodhi ca '
' Vadanti sakala Vedah sethihasapuranakah ' -

Iti arthapancakavivaranarupam Paramapurusharthakam Satvikam Sastram Bhagavan Vasudevah Svayam pranitavan iti. -

Bhagavan Vasudeva has Himself pronounced the Pancaratras.

In Yatiraja Saptati (refer Stotra jala) , it is said :

' Pravakta Chandasavakta Pancaratrasya yah svayam'

God Himself has talked about it -

Thus it is everywhere reiterated that the Adiguru, the original preceptor so far as the Pancaratra is concerned is God Narayana Himself titled Sriyahpati. The Pancaratra sastra is God's own composition.

' Bhagavan adimoguruh -

' Sriyahpatireva svayam racayiteti ' -

Sometimes it is contended that God Himself extracted the essence of the Vedanta and presented it in the form of the Pancaratra.

' Vedanteshu yathasaram samgrihya Bhagavan Harih iti'-

It is clearly suggested in many contexts that God Himself felt that the Srutis and even the Smritis were neither easily accessible nor intelligible to all the people of all castes and denominations. He therefore promulgated, it is said this Pancaratra Sastra for the sake of the whole mankind, for the help of all types of people and for the welfare and utility of all cadres of men and women in general.

'Sarva Vedanta saroddharena sarva jana hitaishina Bhagavata svayameva pranitam Srimat Pancaratra Sastramiti '.

That Pancaratra sastra was brought about by Narayan, the God Himself - (Bhagavatpranitatvam), that it is the quintessence of the Vedanta (Vedantasaramayatvam), that it is for the welfare of one and all (Sarvajanahitaishina) and finally that it is Bhagavat Sastra *par excellence* (Bhagavat sastrasya sarvabhaumam pramanyam) - is emphasised by Nigamanta Guru.

In the Santiparva of the Mahabharata it is stated that the Sastra was first expounded by Bhagavan Narayana to Narada for the sake of promulgating Bhakti.

' Bhagavat Narayanena Bhaktyupanataya Naradaya prathamatah sastramidam'-

Not only is Pancaratra called Bhagavat sastra, it is also named 'Satvata Sastra' - in Isvara Samhita (1-10)

'Etesham satvatam sastram upadeshtum tvamarhasi'

' Ityuktvantardadhe Sriman Narayanamunistada'

' Satvatam vidhimasthaya gitah Samkarshanena yah'

Thus the origin of the Pancaratra agama is traced to the Supreme being Sriman Narayana Himself, who is said to have revealed the Sastra to Narada, Sandilya and other Maharshis through Sanaka and other great ones residing in Svetadvipa - the white island.

In his Sribhashya Ramanuja treats the three terms, Bhagavata, Satvata and Pancaratra as being almost synonymous.

The followers of the Pancaratra agamas are called worshippers of Vasudeva, the Sattvatas, Ekantins, Paramekantins, Suris, the five times worshippers, the Bhagavatas, Suhridbhagavatas, the Pancaratrins, the Pancaratrikas etc.

' Vasudevasca Sattvataih' - (Vishnupurana, 5-16-18)

'Ekantikastumayasca Pancaratrika ityapi'

'Pancaratrikena Vidhina ye Vasudevam aradhayanti te Vasudevanamna, Ekantikanamna (Paramekantinah) surinamna ca sadbhih stuyante' -

Sometimes it is pointed out that the Pancaratra is itself the source of the Vedas.

' Srutimulakamiti Visishyasaikayanasrutyupa brahmakamiti'-

Desika calls Pancaratra ' Ekayana Sruti ' - He says :

' Srutimulamidam tantram pramanam kalpasutravat' -

In a Pancaratragama text namely, Spanda Pradipika, it is said-

' Pancaratra Srutavapi - yadvat sô - pānena prasadamaruhet, plavena va nadim taret, tadvat sastrena hi sastravagantayaha,' Just as we reach the top floor by means of the stairway or just as

we cross a river with the help of a boat so also by means of the sastras do we attain wisdom.

Again,

'Pancaratropanishadi ca - jnata ca - jneya ca vakta ca vacyam ca bhokta ca bhojyam ca' -

' Rigadibhedena vedasakha vibhajanat prak vidyamana Ekayana Sakhaiva Mula veda iti grihyasutramapi kincit tatprayukta Karma pratipadakam iti mulavede ca pratipaditamasanam upa Brahmana Siva Bhagavata Pancaratra sastram svayam pranitam iti ca' -

Utpalacharya in fact says that the Pancaratra should be studied under the three heads :

i. Pancaratra Sruti

ii. Pancaratropanishad

iii. Pancaratra Samhita.

Anyway that Pancaratra is a very ancient doctrine of teachings if not more ancient than the vedas, that it is a 'Pracina mata ' is very well emphasised in the Sattvata, Jayakhya, Paushkara and Padma samhitas.

In fact the Pancaratra doctrines are associated with the Purushasukta of the Rigveda. The Rigveda with its Purushasukta is considered the foundation stone of all later Srivaishnavism and Vaishnava philosophy. In Satapatha Brahmana (13-6-1-1) there is this statement :

' Purushoha Narayano akamayata atitishtebhyam sa vani bhutani ahameva idam sarvam syamiti'

' Sa etam Purushamedham pancaratram yajnakratum apasyat tam aharat tena ayajata tena ishta styatishtat sarvani bhutani idam sarvam abhavat '.

' Ati tishtati sarvani bhutani idam sarvam bhavatiyah evam vidvan purushamedhena yajate yo vai etadevam veda' --

" Purusha - Narayana desired - ' I must transcend and supersede all other beings. I must become one with them all. He

saw the Yajna Purushamedha that persists over five nights. He then became the master of all and Himself became all . . . "

It is normally and correctly taken for granted that there is not and that there cannot be any antagonism between the Vedas and the Agamas in general and that too Pancaratra in particular. It is already pointed out that the Pancaratra doctrines were promulgated by Narayana Himself, by the Supreme Para Brahman. Of course it is mostly held that the vedas are Apaurusheya and not even God is considered its author. But sometimes it is relevantly objected to. The Vedas are also said to be the revelations of God to the enlightened sages and saints. Yamunacharya a savant of Vaishnavism and the predecessor of Ramanujacharya discusses the authenticity and the validity of the Pancaratras in his well-known text ' Agama Pramanya'. He opens his defence of the Pancaratras in the following way :

" It is said that any instruction conveyed through language can be valid either by itself or through the strength of the validity of some other proofs.

No instruction of any ordinary person can be valid by itself. The special ritualistic processes associated with the Pancaratra cannot be known by perception or by inference.

Only God whose powers of perception extend to all objects of the world and which are without any limitation can instil the special injunctions of the Pancaratra." Against the above contention, the opponents of the Pancaratra agama may argue -

" A perception which has all things within its sphere can hardly be called perception. Even if it be conceived that there is a person whose perception is limitless, there is nothing to suggest that he should be able to instruct infalliably about the rituals such as those enjoined in the Pancaratras. There are also no agamas which prescribe the Pancaratra rites " -

· "It cannot be ascertained whether the authors of the Pancaratra works based them on the teachings of the Vedas or

gave their own ideas and views and passed them on as being founded on the Vedas".

The objection is ruled out by saying that the Pancaratra like other scriptures has a common origin in the vedas.

Once again it is pointed out that those who follow the Pancaratra rites are as good brahmins as other brahmins who follow the vedic rites -

The opponents of the Pancaratras point out that the Pancaratra doctrines are repudiated in the smriti texts founded on the vedas such as the Smritis of Manu, e.g.

They quote Manu by repeating -

'Vaiśyāt tu jāyate vratyāt sudhanvā carya eva ca '

' Bharushasca nijanghasca maitra - sattvata eva ca ' .

The word ' Sattvata' indicates a lower caste and the terms 'Bhagavata' and 'Sattvata ' are interchangeable. It is said that a 'Sattvata ' of the Pancama caste who worships in temples by the king's orders is called a ' Bhagavata'. It is further argued that the Pancarātrins may have all the external marks and appearance of Brahmins but yet they are not so regarded in society, that at social gatherings and in dinners the Vaidic brahmins do not sit in the same line with the Bhagavatas or the followers of the Pancaratra. Worshippers of images are to be looked down. To eke out their livelihood the Sattvatas worship images and live upon the offerings for initiation and those made to temple Gods. These Pancaratrins do not perform the vedic duties and so have no relationship or common ground with the brahmins and so they cannot be regarded as brahmins.

Quotes (from Agama pramanya)

'Pancamah satvatonama vishnoh ayatanani sah '

' Pujayedajnayā rajnam sa tu bhagavatah smritah iti '

' Tatha Brahme purane Vishnoh ayatanani sa pujayet ajnaya rajnam '

' Iti tatha anyatrapi satvanam ca devayatanasodhanam naivadyasodhanam pratimasamrakshananam iti, tatha ca idrisa sandehavyudasaya manorvacah'

' Pracchannā vā prakasavā veditavyah svakarmabhih ' iti.

' Api ca acaratastesham abrahmanyam pratiyate '

' Vritti to devatā pujā dīkshā naivedya - bhakshanam'.

' Garbhadanadi dahantasamskarantara sevanam '

' Sroutakriya ananushthanam dvijaih sambandhavarjanam '

' Ityadibhih anacaraih abrahmanyam sunirnayam '.

' Vidvarāham ca shandam ca yupam devalakam śavam'

' Bhunjano nekshayedvipro drishtva candrayanam caret'.

' Iti prayascittam smaranti, tatha ca visadataramamisha devopabrahmanyam varnayatpratrih'.

Avaluka devalakah kalpadevalaka, ganabhogadevalaka bhagavatavrittiriti caturthah ete abrahmana iti',

' Tatha ca Bhagavan Vyasah -

' Ahvayaka devalakah nakshatragramayajakah ete brahmaṅa candalau mahapathika pancamah' .

It is said vehemently that even if we are to look at a man who has taken to worship as a means of livelihood, by chance, we become polluted and we are consequently to be purified by properly prescribed vedic purificatory rites.

It is thus concluded in many of the Smritis that the Pancaratra texts are adopted by the retrograde sattvatas or the bhagavatas and that therefore the pancaratras must be condemned as non-vedic and put down as invalid. As an annexe to this vituperative argument it is further pointed out that if in fact this pancaratra literature were founded on the Vedas there would be no sense in their recommendations of special kinds of rituals not already mentioned in the vedas.

Yamuna coolly points out - May be some of the injunctions of the pancaratras do not tally with the injunctions of the brahminic smriti literature. But such contradictions are not important as both are based on vedic texts.

' Vedokhilo dharmamulam smritisile ca tadvidam' .
" Sruti smriti vihito dharmah . Sa sarvo abhihito vede
sarvajnanamayo hi sah" -

Since the validity of the brahminic smrutis is said to be based on the vedas, there is no necessity for the pancaratra to acquiesce to the injunctions of these smrutis.

About the Paurusheyatva or Apaurusheyatva of the Vedas -

Even if it is acclaimed that the vedas are the literary compositions of a person, then that Divine person who directly perceives the sources of merit or demerit enjoins the same through his grace by composing the vedas for the benefit of human beings. Even the Mimamsikas admit that all worldly affairs are the effects of merit and de-merit. The Divine being who has created the world knows directly the sources of merit and demerit that have been responsible for the pattern and shaping of the world and its human affairs. It is well known that the world cannot be produced directly through the effects of our deeds. There has to be an agent who utilises the effects of our deeds and then produces the world in terms of Karma or Adrishta. All the scriptures acclaim that such an agent is none other than God Himself, the Omniscient and the Omnipotent. Yamuna then concludes, it is this very God who on the one hand created the Vedas prescribing rituals and sacrifices for mankind for the attainment of pleasures and happiness both in this world and in the heavens hereafter, and who on the other hand created the Pancaratras also for the benefit of mankind not for the mundane well-being and the pleasures of Heaven perhaps, but for the highest bliss of adoring God, worshipping Him and finally attaining His immediate presence in God's permanent abode and thus avoiding the cycle of births and deaths once for all.

Thus what applies to the Vedas as the compositions of God, the same refers to the Pancaratras also as equally the compositions of God, why as even better compositions of God as they advise men on everlasting happiness.

To quote from Agama pramanya again:-

" Yadanubhava nibandhanam Vedapramanyam
Tadanubhava- nibandhanam pancaratrapramanyam iti " -

" Nanu ca kimidamapaurusheyatvam Vedanam , yadi nitya-
varnarabdhatvam samanamidam pancaratratantranam ".

" Srutimurdhni prasiddhena sarvajnenaiva nirmitam "

" Tantram mithyeti vaktum nah

" Katham jihva pravarttate ".

There are some who deny a legitimate inference of a creator from the creation and consider the Vedas an eternally existent composition uncreated by any divine being whatsoever (Apaurusheyatva). Even in such cases the reasons and proofs advanced for the validity of the Vedas and smrutis are equally tenable for the validity of the Pancaratra literature also. Further as a matter of fact from the very vedas themselves we can easily know that their composer is God Himself the Supreme Being. This Supreme Being referred to in the Upanishads is none other than Vasudeva. It is Vasudeva that is the Composer of the Pancaratra. Also it is pointed out that the Vedas apart from discoursing on Vidhis and Nishedhas, also describe the nature of the ultimate reality as the Divine person. The Pancaratras also discourse on Narayana or Vasudeva as the ultimate reality and therefore as authentic as the Vedas themselves.

It is interesting and also distressing to note that while a few exclusive followers of the vedas decry the pancaratra and denounce the pancaratrins in an unbecoming way, the champions of the Pancaratra invariably point out that the philosophy and the practices of the pancaratra do not in any way contradict the vedic teachings and even at the worst they don't clash with the mandates of the vedas but only run parallel to the vedic injunctions. The Pancaratrins do not want to be labelled as avaidic. In other words, while a few over-scrupulous followers of the vedas are definitely hostile towards the pancaratrins the followers of the pancaratra and the bhagavata cults are

meticulously careful not to offend anybody let alone the sensibilities of the zealots of the vedic sect. They are in fact ever compromising, conciliatory and cooperative. Even when it is reported that Sandilya turned to the doctrine of bhakti as he could not find anything worthwhile in the four vedas suitable for the attainment of his desired end, the followers of the Pancaratra do not make much of a fuss about it at all nor do they make it even a convenient opportunity to revile the vedic litany and rituals. They rather go gallantly to the rescue of the vedas and demurely state that the desired end as recommended in the pancaratras is not different from that prescribed in the vedas.

Sometimes it is pungently pointed out that if the pancaratra doctrines were in consonance with the vedic injunctions then one would have had certainly discovered the relevant vedic texts from which they were derived. Though this remark smacks a little of arrogance on the part of the vedic fanatics, Yamuna coolly replies that the pancaratra texts were produced by God Narayana Himself for the benefit of devotees who were impatient of following the elaborate details of rituals as prescribed and described in the Vedic literature. In the interests of preserving the sanctity of the vedas and protecting their impressive statelines of aspect it may not be desirable to disclose the relevant vedic texts supporting the pancaratra texts as otherwise it would definitely mean exposing the loopholes and voids in vedic literature. It really looks obtuse and crass sometimes when it is pointed out that the pancaratra recommends special ritual ceremonies in addition to the vedic ceremonies and that therefore they are non-vedic. An intelligent reply can be given to this broad-side by just stating that it implies argument in a circle. The Pancaratras are themselves not non-vaidic and the additional ceremonies can no more be so.

It is often disgustingly repeated that Badarayana has refuted the Pancaratra doctrines. It is well-known that Badarayana is himself the compiler of the vedas, the author of the Puranas and the composer of the Brahmasutras. He is also the author of the Mahabharata. How could Badarayana refute the pancaratra

doctrines in the Brahmasutras and extol the same in the Mahabarata ? It only means that the interpretations put on the Brahmasutras referring to the Pancaratra are vitiated and not that Badarayana has deceived himself. The barbed broadside sometimes delivered that the Pancaratras advocate a plurality of Gods namely the four Vyuhas of Vasudeva, Samkarshana, Pradyumna and Aniruddha and that this plethora is resented by Badarayana who believes in one Brahman and that therefore he repels the pancaratras is not only a slight on Badarayana, it is revealing itself of the colossal ignorance about the philosophy of the Pancaratras. It is well-known that the Four Vyuhas are successive emanations of the ultimate one and that God Para-Vasudeva is the one and the only ultimate reality of the pancaratras.

Even from the narrow angle of begotted orthodoxy to cry down the Pancaratrins and the Bhagavatas as Non-brahmins is not warranted since the Bhagavatas have the same marks of brahminhood as all other brahmins have. Quoting Manu and adding to the holocaust is still worse The fact that Manu describes the Pancamas as of Sattvata caste does not prove that all Sattvatas are Pancamas. To make a sweeping statement that all Sattvatas are Pancamas is unjust as it contradicts many of the scriptural texts where Sattvatas are praised. True it is that some Sattvatas live by the profession of temple building and image building. It does not thereby imply that that is the profession of all the Bhagavatas. It is too early at this stage of arguing in a narrow angle of bigotted orthodoxy to raise questions on controversial topics such as the status of the so-called the Pancamas, the hierarchy of castes and professions and avocations and also on that most dubitable disputation about the status of sex. Let us not disturb a hornet's nest at this stage of a limited controversy. It is enough to point out at this stage that even superior men and the most respected men of society do follow the Pancaratra instructions in connection with all the rituals relating to image worship and that idolatry is not so reprehensible as conceived to be by a few. Even the respectable

men of respected society do worship images and let us take up an oblique stand and say because respectable men do so, image worship may be tolerated.

Yamuna in his Agama pramanya, though not truculently, at least succinctly has pointed out that the Pancaratra doctrines are not avaidic.

It is often taken as conclusively proved and as a closed issue that the vedic people were not image worshippers. It is often contended that image worship and temple worship were of later origin and hoisted on the vedic people subsequently. The conflict between the vedic people and the image worshippers seems to have been a long one. Of late we have ample evidence to show that even in the second century B.C. the Bhagavata cult was a living religion, not only in the south of India but also in Upper India. Ample evidences are dug out to prove that image worship was in vogue in India in the sixth century B.C. The testimony of the Besnagar (BHILSA) column and other inscriptions shows that even the Greeks were converted into the Bhagavata cult.. The Mahabharata speaks of the Sattvata rites according to which Vishnu was worshipped. It also refers to the Vyuha doctrine of the Pancaratras. The Narayaniya section refers to Svetadvipa as the original home of the pancaratrins. Nobody can gainsay the great antiquity of the pancaratras and their authenticity and authority. But there is always the undercurrent of resentment against the pancaratras (particularly in the minds of the avowed custodians of the vedas) for the simple reason that the pancaratras easily displace many of the elaborate vedic sacrifices and rituals by idol worship, that they promote universality and a common approach and help in making God more easily accessible to the worshipper. Of course reluctantly they give the pancaratras a status and standing although all the while the pancaratrins never accuse the vedas, never belittle their votaries and even go to the extremist limit of calling the vedas as their source, guardian and friend. They say the very God who revealed the Vedas also revealed the Pancaratra. With all due deference to the Vedas and in all humility the Srivaishnavas

simply say that the pancaratras are as authoritative as the vedas. That is all.

Venkatanatha and others point out how sometimes it is viewed that the pancaratra is an accessory to the vedas, or that the vedas are rooted in the pancaratras or that the pancaratras are rooted in the vedas or even that the pancaratra is an alternative to the vedas

Quotes :

' Idammaho - panishadam catur Vedasamanvitam
Samkhya-yoga Kritantena pancaratranusabditam'

That pancaratra is an accessory or adventitious to the vedas. (Sesvara mimamsa).

' Mahato Veda-vrikshasya mulabhuto mahan ayam '
That the vedas are rooted in the pancaratra.

' Srutimulam idam tantram pramana-kalpa-sutravat '
That the pancaratras are rooted in the vedas.

' Alabhe veda-mantranam panca-ratro-ditena va' -
That the pancaratra is an alternative to the vedas.

Isvara Samhita a very important and ancient samhita text of the pancaratra strikes a very valuable and interesting note. This samhita declares that to begin with there was only Vasudeva the Supreme Lord and with Him there was His EKAYANA Veda, the only one original veda. The well publicised four vedas as we know them now namely, Rig, Yajur, Sama and Atharvan are considered to be of later origin and did not exist at the time of Vasudeva being by Himself with His Ekayana veda. Therefore it is argued out that the four vedas as known to us now are called VIKARA vedas. In the early days of the Universe when only Ekayana veda was in circulation people were all genuinely God-minded, Paramekantins and looked upon Vasudeva only as their true God. Later on when the Vikara vedas (caturvedas) were also brought about and put into circulation, there came about a slow degeneration all around, people became more and

more worldly minded and sought after pleasures and recompense not only in this world but also in the Heavens. The idea of returning to God once and for all never even lurked in their minds. Souls began to behave like truant sons. The Para Brahma got upset and withdrew immediately the Ekayana veda and later revealed it only to a select few, the elite and deserving few such as Sana, Sanatsujata, Sanaka , Sanandana, Sanatkumara, Kapila and Sanatana, the chosen few who were all called Ekantins. Later sages such as Atri, Angirasa, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, Vasista and Svayambhuva also learnt this Ekayana veda from Narayana. It is said that Samkarshana himself inspired and encouraged the writing of the pancaratra texts such as Sattvata, Paushkara and Jayakhya samhitas in accordance with the fundamental tenets of the Ekayana veda. Even Sandilya is said to have learnt the principal doctrines of the Ekayana veda from Samkarshana. It is the contents of Ekayana veda as taught that are called Sattvika sastra. The Sastras written by Maharshis with their own indigenous contributions but mainly based on the tenets of Ekayana veda are called Rajasic sastras. To this category of Rajasic sastras is said to belong the two types of literature, the Pancaratra and Vaikhanasa. Be it as they may the contention of this samhita that the pancaratras are the direct descendants of Ekayana veda as revealed and taught by Vāsudeva Himself and that the Ekayanaveda is itself the matrix of the caturvedas and that the Ekayanaveda is definitely superior to the caturvedas as the former deals primarily with the realisation of God, the Supreme is very significant indeed.

Of course in some of the puranas and smrutis also the Pancaratrins are derided and denounced. These statements of condemnation are provoked primarily by the unreasonable die-hard fanaticism of a few. They can never be justified by the enlightened progressives. For instance in the Kurma purana it is mentioned that only those who had an atrocious record of worst sinning in their previous births such as killing of cows could be born as pancaratrins. The pancaratrins are classed along with

some other tantric sects of doubtful standing and reprehensible practices such as the Kapalis and the Bhairavas.

"Kapalam Garudam saktam
" Bhairavam purva - pascimam
" Panca - ratram Pasupatam
" Tathanyani sahasrasah " -

In Skanda Purana also mention is made as follows:

" Pancaratre ca kapale tatha kalamukhepi ca "
"Sakte ca dikshita yuyam bhavate brahmanadhamah "

Parasara purana, Sambha purana, Suta samhita, Vayu, Linga, Aditya and Agni puranas all refer to the pancaratrins as an accursed lot and go to the extent of saying that anyone found conversing even with the pancaratrins is to be excommunicated. Anyone associating himself with the pancaratrins is said to go to the worst hell, Raurava Naraka, as the pancaratrins are 'avaidic'. The vedic fury is unleashed against the Pancaratrins for the simple reason that they made no distinction between women and men, Pancama and Sudra or a Sudra and Brahmin, so far as religion was concerned. They the pancaratrins acclaimed that even the so called pancamas, sudras and women were entitled to worship and were deserving of God's grace, that sinners also could repent, appeal for God's mercy and approach him if God willed so. While God Himself was more considerate to the 'underdogs', it was only a few bigots that snorted and howled at the most unassuming, sedate and sanguine followers of a simple honest and soul-respecting religion of the pancaratras. The salutary aspect of the Pancaratra religion and, philosophy will be discussed later. The sattvatas and Bhagavatas could never be the accursed sinners with their simple philosophy and a universal religion. All that we can say in reply to the allegations and invectives poured on the pancaratrins is that we are very sorry for the opponents of the pancaratra.

There are of course Puranas like the Bhagavata, the Vishnu Purana and the Mahabharata that are strongly in favour of the

pancaratras. The Naradiya, Padma, Garuda and Varaha are also in special favour of the Pancaratras. The Vishnu dharmottara purana, Brahmanda purana, Prajapatya smriti, Itihasa samuccaya, Harivamsa, Vriddha manu and the Sandilya smriti also stand in good stead and in preference to the Pancaratras.

About the Puranas there is this observation made that curiously enough-while some sections of a Purana extol the-pancaratra doctrines, some other sections of the same purana decry the Pancaratra and the Pancaratrins. Such types of anomalies are very commonly met with in all the Puranas in regard to several topics. From the same Skanda purana the following is quoted by Yamuna in his Agama pramanya in favour of the pancaratras.

' Sāpeksha nirapekshatve na hi badhasya karanam '
' Suktau rajatabodhasya nirapekshasya badhakam '
' Nedam rajatavijnanam tatsapeksham apikshate '
' Seyam jvaleti samvittestailavartivinasaja '
' Anumanabadhika drishtva sapakshapyakshajanmanah '
' Ato niravakasena savakasam nishidhyate '
' Nacoham savakasatvam Bhagavacchastraveda yoh '
' Atha srutiviruddhasya tantrabhagasya dussakam '
' Vasudeva pranitatvam niscetumiti manyase '
' Pancaratra virudhasya vedabhagasya va katham '
' Apaurusheyata jnanamavirbhavati badhitam '
' Tasyapi Vedabhagatvat tatha bhavo abhyupeyate '
' Asyapi Pancaratratvat tatpranitatvamishyatam '
' Karturasmaranattatra yadi capaurusheyat '
' Tatkartrukatvasmrutyatra kinnasyat tatpranitata '
' Astinyastrikumaram sa dhrida smrutiparampara '
' Pancaratrasya nirmata kesavo Bhagavaniti '
' Tat pranitatva visvasad gajanasvan dhanam bahu '
' Dakshinam vividhan datva pratishthadini kurvate '
' Samkhyasya Kapilovakta Pancaratrasya kesavah ' -
' Iti Skanda purane patyate ' -

Yamuna quotes from Mahabharata also :

' Pancaratrasya kristnasya vakta Narayanah svayam '

' Idam mahopanishadam caturvedasamanvitam '

' Samkhyayoga kritantena pancaratranusabditam '

' Narayana mukhodgitam Narado asravayanmunin '

' Brahmanassadane tata yatha drishtam yatha srutam '

' Evamadi puranoktaih sahasraih nyaya vrimhitaih '

' Vasudeva pranitatvam pancaratrasya nirvyartham '

' Kimtu Vedasya nityatve vivadante vipascitah '

' Tena nirdosha vijnana karanatvat dvayorapi '

' Nirvisankam pramanatvam Bhagavat sastravedayoh '

' Tatasca tulyasishtatvad vikalpena pramanata '

' Iti mattvā etadacashte sutrakaro mahamanah '

' Vijnanadibhaveva tadapratishedha iti ' -

' Yatha aushnyabhava niscayo nabhasi '

' Tadadharabhava niscaya jjaletu tadviruddha saityopa lambhaditi - kimca '

' Etaduktam bhavati ubhayorapi svatah pramanyayoh ekatra doshabhavaniscayah tadasrayapurushabhava niscayat anyatra tadviruddhaguna - vaktrukatvaniscaya-diti ' -

Yamuna wonders how one can say Badarayana disapproved of the pancaratras himself being a parama bhagavata -

To quote from Agamapramanya :

" Yattu Bhagavata Badarayanena nirastatvaditi **tadasat,** Kathahi bhagavan Dvaipayanah sakalalokadarsabhuta parama bhagavato Bhagavatam sastram nirasyatiti utpreksyeta : "

' Ya evamaha ' -

' Idham satasahasraddhi Bharatakhyana vistarat '

' Avidhya matimanthanam dadhno ghritamivodghritam'

' Navanitam yatha dadhno dvipadam Brahmano yatha '

'Aranyakam ca vedebhya aushadibhyo yatha amrutam'

'Idam sreya idam brahma idam hitam anuttamam'

'Rigyajussamabhirjushtam atharvangirasaistatha'

'Bhavishyati pramanam vai etadevanusasanam'

'Iti Bhishmaparvasyapi :'

" Brahmanaih kshatriyaih vaisyaih sudraisca krita lakshanaih'

'Arcaniyasca sevyasca pujaniyasca madhavah'

'Sattvatam vidhimasthaya gitassamkrshanena yah'

'Dvaparasya yugasthane adau Kaliyugasya ca' iti -

'Tatha Shantiparvanyapi :

" Avasyam Vaishnavo diksham praviset sarvayatnatah'

'Dikshitaya viseshena prasidennanyatha Harih'

'Vasante dikshayedvipram'

'Grishme rajanyamevaca'

'Saradah samaye vaisyam Hemante sudramevaca'

'Striyamca varshakale tu Pancaratravidhanatah'

'Tatha -

'Vedaiscaturbhirssamitam kritam merau mahagirau'

'Evamadivacobhangi sataissadaramiritaih'

'Vedantasara sarvasvam atmiyam paramam matam'

Pancaratram nirakuryat katham Dvaipayana svayam "

How can Dvaipayana ever think of rejecting a philosophy that is the quintessence of the vedanta and one that is so near and dear to him, asks Yamuna.

Finally I wish to quote another passage from Agama pramanya wherein Yamunacharya asserts that even the tongue of man refuses to act, if it is to speak out the pancaratra pronounced by Vasudeva Himself is a false precept :

'Srutimurdhni prasiddhena Vasudevena bhashitam'

'Tantram mithyeti vaktunnah katham jihva pravartate'

'Tattvam jijnasamananam hetubhih sarvato mukhaih'

'Tattvameko mahayogi Harinarayana prabhuh'
'Vedena pancaratrena bhaktya yajnena ca dvija'
'Prapyoham nanyatha prapyo varsha laksha satairapi'
'Pancaratram sahasranam yadi kascid grahishyati'
'Kamakshaye ca madbhakto yadi kascid bhavishyati'
'Tasya vedah pancaratram nityam hridi vasishyati'
'Yadiham pancaratramme sastram paramadurlabham'
'Tadbhavan vetsyate sarvam matprasadat asamsayam'
'Puranaiscaiva vedaisca pancaratraistathaivaca'
'Dhyāyanti yogino nityam kratubhisca yajantitam'
'Evamekam samkhyam yogam vedaranyakamevaca'
'Parasparanganyetani pancaratramca satmama'
'Vedena pancaratrena yah pasyati sa pasyati'
'Idam mahopanishadam caturvedasamanvitam'

He who sees through the eyes of the vedas and the pancaratras, he truly sees. This pancaratra is the greatest of the Upanishads on a par with the vedas.

Thus for this age long double controversy whether

i. The Agamas are vedic or unvedic

ii. Idolatry - image worship is vedic or unvedic.

It has been customary morality, customary orthodoxy and customary respectability to refer everything to the vedas and if anything is found to be in conformity to the vedas it is accepted as desirable and orthodox. If anything is in non-conformity it is rejected as undesirable, transgressive and therefore unorthodox and unacceptable. The vedas have been the touch stone of Indian philosophy, religion, culture and even uprightness and dignity. The vedas are once again considered to be the sweet milk of Aryan culture and the cream of Aryan thought. Nay, the vedas are taken to be just Revealed Truths and not even God is taken to be their author (Apaurusheyatva) so much so there is that eternal and irresolvable controversy' as to how the one and the only Omniscient God or Brahman could be juxtaposed with the

Vedas. If God and the vedas could both be eternal knocking against each other, it looks clumsy. Therefore some of the more sophisticated thinkers have yielded to the viewpoint that God could be the author of the vedas or atleast its editor for mankind.

The simple argument of the pancaratrins is, just as God gave the world the vedas, the same God gave the world the Agamas also for the benefit of mankind. Might be the Agamas strike a different note of worship not described in the vedas, but yet definitely suggested and referred to in the vedas. Idolatry, temple worship, mother worship (worship of Lakshmi, Sarasvati and Parvati in her various forms such as Sakti, Kali, Durga, Tara, Tarini and other Goddesses), the concepts of Bhakti and Prapatti, might not have been advocated largely in the vedas and dealt with in detail. These are the special subjects of the Agamas and Tantras. Anyway the point at issue is that pancaratra agama cannot be openly inveighed against, merely because some of its precepts and practices are not brought to a focus in the vedas, amplified and expatiated upon by the vedas. Yet they are not ignored in the vedas let alone being repudiated. They are referred to and that is why it is invariably pointed out with justification by all the Acharyas, that the Pancaratra cults are touched upon and endorsed by the vedas. Equally appropriately it is pointed out that God Narayana who gave the vedas to the world also gave the pancaratra to Narada and a few chosen sages for the benefit of mankind and for a special purpose of seeking liberation by an easier means. Worship of images, practising bhakti and prapatti, these are the forte of the Pancaratra and these the pancaratrins say in no way clash with the vedic injunctions. If at all any discrepancies are found God is only is responsible and not the followers of God's enunciations. Even if the tenets of the Pancaratra are found superior in some respects to those of the vedas, God once again gets the credit. Why should the pancaratrins be assailed or reproached as avaidic and accursed we cannot understand. The Bhagavatas cannot be held responsible for the susceptibilities of the sensible adorers of the vedas. That is why it has been insisted upon by all the great

sages and saints that Nigamas and Agamas should both be appreciated as God's revelations to man. That the worship of images was long anterior to the age of the Bhagavadgita, the Bhagavata and the Ramayana in their earliest forms is now considered as very probable in spite of what westein scholars may say to the contrary.

It is again true that no clear reference to such matters is found in the Bhagavadgita although the verse VII /21 Gita says :

" Yo yo yam yam tanum bhaktah sraddhayarchitum icchati '

"Tasya tasyachalam shraddham tameva vidadhamyaham"

This verse has to be considered as referring not merely to faith and worship of Rama, Krishna etc., the avataras but also to various Bimbas and Pratimas established throughout the land of Aryavartha.

The references to CHAITYAS and Ayatanas in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata in various places clearly indicate the worship of images established in those times.

The general rule in PANINI-IV-3-95 prescribing certain terminations where **Bhakti or devotion** is meant, has an exception when the object of worship is **Vasudeva or Arjuna**-IV-3-95 in which case another termination is prescribed. This sutra has been considered as referring to the worship of images of Vasudeva and Arjuna though this is not absolutely necessary as the context shows worship of various things and persons in the form of mere mental devotion.

So also the preceding quotation from Gita may be construed as referring not to images but to the usual sacrificial worship.

Similarly Gita Verse - XVII . 4

' Yajante Sattvika devanyaksharashamsi rajasah '

' Pretan Bhutaganamscanye yajante tamasa janah '

is one of doubtful application to images if strictly construed.

But in all other verses it is possible that there is an underlying reference to image worship. - Anyway we are not justified in assuming negatively that the method of image worship was unknown in the days of the Gita or the Mahabharata.

Of course it is strongly asserted by the opponents of the Pancaratra,

That the Bhagavatas were the Sudras or degraded brahmins

That the Pancaratra worship was unvedic,

That the sattvatas disregarded the vedic samskaras and substituted others in their places.

That the doctrine of the birth of the Jeevas and the mind from the Jivas namely the concepts of Samkarshana and Aniruddha are opposed utterly to vedantic-precepts.

And so on and so forth.

Even Sankaracharya while accepting the Bhagavata doctrine as to the four Vyuhas and incidentally Vasudeva being the Supreme soul, considers that there are objectionable doctrines in the Pancaratra and he says Badarayana wished to refute them.

However Yamunacharya has conclusively argued out that the Pancaratras are out and out Vaidic and that they do not trespass any of the limits prescribed by the vedas. Ramanujacharya takes up the lead given to him by his guru Yamuna, puts an altogether different construction to the Brahma Sutras differing from Shankara and proves with unassailable logic and convincing evidences both from the Srutis and the Puranas that the Pancaratra agama is unopposed to the doctrines of Vedanta. Ramanuja comes to the inevitable conclusion that the Pancaratra agama is entirely approved by Badarayana as the latter is Vyasa himself and cannot therefore be taken to contradict himself and his own statements in the Mahabharata.

Unfortunately the arguments of Yamuna, Ramanuja and Deshika were not conceived of even by the Dravida Bhashyakaras anterior to Shankara and it was sometimes even reluctantly admitted before the time of Shankara that Pancaratra as a Tantra Sastra contained some unvedic precepts.

However this might have been it has been established by later Vaishnava Acharyas that the Pancaratra is entirely orthodox, sound and consistent with the vedas or atleast equally as authoritative and that the author of the Brahmasutras really meant to approve of this system though Badarayana resented the Pasupata and other allied Tantras.

That the tenets and practices of the Pancaratra are approved by the vedas and admitted by the smritis and puranas is now well established, thanks primarily to the logic and logistics of argument as primarily employed by Yamunacharya in his Agamapramanya and subsequently followed by Ramanujacharya and Desika.

By the testimony of the srutis, puranas and the Pancaratra samhitas themselves we can safely conclude without any hesitation that the tenets of pancaratra were first pronounced by Narayana Himself to the beseeching saints. However much we may scrutinise the philosophy and the practices of the pancaratra we cannot find even a streak of self-contradiction in its philosophy nor can we detect any detestable, unwanted or displeasing practices in its religion. Rather we can observe very pleasing and enlightened methods of approach to God-realisation as also salient and courteous features of self-realisation in society, in the comity and fraternity of mankind. It is the philosophy of having faith and trust in one All Merciful Almighty in seeing God in man and in all His creations, in worshipping God, adoring Him, loving Him by first knowing all His great gunas, in surrendering to Him absolutely and thereby elevating oneself to Divinity and finally in endeavouring to reach His Fternal Abode once for all by passing the ever revolving cycle of births and deaths.

THE LANDMARKS OF PANCARATRA - ITS LITERATURE

VARIED ARE the interpretations and meanings given to the term Pancaratra. Each interpretation emphasises a particular aspect and therefore all the interpretations taken together help us in getting a synoptic and a synergetic view of it.

One of the Samhitas says that it is called pancaratra because it consists of five lectures delivered by God Narayana to five deities, Ananta, Garuda, Visvaksena, Brahma and Rudra respectively during five nights (Pancaratra).

Another Samhita indicates that it is called pancaratra because by it five other systems of thought namely Samkhya, Yoga, Pasupata, Bouddha and Arhata (Jaina) are obscured, that is, made nights (darkened - Ratriyante).

'Pancetarani sastrani ratriyante mahantyapi'

'Tatsannidhau samakhyasau tena loke pravartate'

In Padma samhita it is specifically stated as follows :

'Sāmkhya yoga - vaiseshika -nyaya - mimamsakhyani'

'Panca itarani sastrani yatra ratriyante (adrisyani bhavanti) iti ya vyutpattih pancaratra sabdasya' -

By the inculcation of the doctrines and practices of the pancaratra cult the other systems and disciplines as those of Samkhya, yoga, vaiseshika, nyaya and purvamimamsa are darkened, dulled, and screened out.

A third derivation for the meaning of the term pancaratra is given, giving the connotation of 'knowledge' to the term 'Ratra'. Ratra is said to mean knowledge and the system of Pancaratra is said to delineate five kinds of knowledge as follows :

1. Tattva - Truth.
2. Mukti - Liberation.
3. Bhakti - Devotion.
4. Yoga - Concentration.
5. Vishaya - Material things.

This derivative meaning for the term 'Ratra' is given in Narada Pancaratra as follows :

"Ratram ca jnana vacanam Jnanam Pancavidham smrutam "

" *Tenedam 'panca ratram hi pravadanti manishinah* "

" Panca vidhani ratrani jnanani "

Ratri Jnana is five-fold.

' Ratram athava ratriti sabdasya jnanarthameva upakalpyate'

Still another interpretation very close to the previous one is that Pancaratra means 'Destroyer of Ignorance' -

' Ratriva jnanamityuktam panceti ajnananasakam' -

In Vishnu samhita the above interpretation is very clearly stated :

' Ratrayo gocarah pancasabdadi vishayatmikah '

' Mahabhutatmaka ratra pancaratramidam tatah '

' Avapyatu paramtejo yatritah pancaratrayah'

' Nasyanti Pancaratram tat sarva ajnana vinasakam '

There is another very significant interpretation given as to why this sastra is called Pancaratra. It is called Pancaratra Agama as it is just an illustration of the five forms of Narayana the Supreme namely :

1. PARA
2. VYUHA
3. VIBHAVA
4. HARDA
5. ARCA.

In Satapatha Brahmana it is stated :

'Purusho ha Narayano akamayat' -

Both in Purusha sukta and Narayanopanishad it is expressed that Narayan, the Supreme God Himself desired to be worshipped in HIS five forms namely Para, Vyuha, Vibhava, Antaryami and Arca.

'Narayana svarupameva nirupayatiti svatmanaiva tena avirbhavitanam Para-Vyuha-Vibhava-Antaryami-Arcakhyanam pancanam murtinam svarupa nirupakaram Bhagavaccha-strakhya pancaratra sastram sa eva pranitavan iti' ---

According to the contentions of the Satapatha Brahmana, ultimately Isvara, God Himself is the author of the Pancaratra as God Narayana Himself is Yajnarupadhara and Satrapurusha.

'Sathapatha Brahmanokta ritya sa eva yajna-rupa dharah pancaratra Satra-purushah svayam sampadyata iti' -

In Ahirbudhnya Samhita also it is stated (38-39) -

"Yajnarupadharam devam yajate svatmanaiva yah"

"Tena sarve kruta yajna bhavanti ha mahatmana"

In the same Ahirbudhnya samhita it is further stated - (22-62, 63).

'Sadagamayat tasmat kevala divyasasanat'

'Nirmame saramuddhritya svayam Vishnurasamkulam'

'Tatpara Vyuha Vibhava Svabhavadi nirupanam'

'Pancaratrahvayam tantra mokshaika phalalakshanam

Pancaratra tantra is characterised by the easy way to Moksha, liberation.

In Isvara Samhita (31) it is stated :

'Pancayudhamsaste panca Sandilya Scanpagayanah'

'Maunjyayanah Kausikasca Bharadvajasca yoginah'

'Pancapi prithagekaikam diva ratram jagatprabhuh'

'Adhyapayamasa yatah tatastan munipungavan'
'Sastram sarvajanairloke Pancaratramitiryate'

'Pancayudhanam amsatvena pariganyamanebhyah panca-bhyah Sandilyadi munipungavebhyah pancabhi ahoratraih paramena pumsananvasya pragdhyapitatvat " Pancaratram " iti namna sarvatra sastramidam prathitam iti' -

It is called Pancaratra because it was studied by Sandilya and other great Maharshis whose origin could be traced to the panca tattvas representing the five weapons of the Lord.

Another view is that it is called Pancaratra because it details five times worship a day. In Jayakhya Samhita (11-14,16) Pancaratra is called PANCA KALA SASTRA.

'Pancakarma anushtana, pancakala nirdesanena pancaratra iti samgya'

It is called Pancaratra as it gives a detailed description of the prescribed rituals and worship five times a day (Pancakala Anushtana and Pancakala Nirdesana).

'Vividha nimittani vividha Bhagavatkainkaryani
Anurudhyaiva dinamekam pancadha vibhaktam'

The day is divided into five parts for purposes of worship.

"Ekasyaivahi kalasya Vasaviyasya Narada
Aprabhatnnisantam vai pancadha parikalpana"
"Prithak karmavasat karya na kala bhavat smrutah"
" Pancapi Vasaviya vibhagaḥ kaleshu teshu"

"Vaidhatvena praptah pancadharma va- Pancaratra sabdasya Abhigamanam, Upadanam, Ijya, Svadhyayah, Yogah iti pancanam Bhagavatkainkarya rupanam karmanam pratyaham anushthanartham pratiniyatah pancakalah sastresmin yatah santi samvibhaktah tatha idam nameti" -

The Pancaratra stipulates five periods of the day which are respectively called:

i. Abhigamana - This is morning worship after the daily purification ceremonies and extends to six nadikas from sunrise, i.e., The first fifth part of the day.

ii. Upadana - The Upadana is the acquisition of the daily needs of worship and is assigned to the second period.

iii. Ijya - This is the principal worship of the day and is done at mid-day or the third portion.

iv. Svadhyaya - The rest of the day after meals is to be devoted to Svadhyaya - Study of the Puranas, the Vedanta or other treatises teaching Salvation to the Vaishnavites.

v. Yoga - The period of Yoga is after night meals and before sleep when quiet meditation on God is enjoined. In fact Pancaratra is called the Sastra of the Pancakala - Parayanah. It is the Sastra of the Bhagavatas who are incidentally called Pancakala Parayanah.

Desika says :

'Pancakalavyavasthityai Venkatesa Vipascita'

'Sri pancaratra siddhanta vyavastheyam samarthita'

In fact Venkatanath refers to Pancaratra in the following terms :

' Viditanigama simna Venkateshena tattadbahusamaya samaksham baddha jaitradhvajena'

' Pratipadamaradhanam pushyatam sattvatanam'

' Parishadi Vihiteyam Pancakalasya Raksha'

Finally we may say the science of Pancaratra is so called because just as it underlines the Pancakala worship it also emphasises the Panca-samskara that is a *must* for all the Srivaishnavas . The five Samskaras are the following :

i. The Tapa

ii. The Pundra

iii. The Nama

iv. The Mantra

v. · The Yoga or daily worship.

Vedanta Desika says in his Saccaritra Raksha that these Samskaras were commended and recognised even in vedic times and that they are not mere innovations of the Pancaratrins. The significance of the Pancasamskaras as also of the Pancakala worship will be discussed later. It is enough if I point out at this stage, that uniform practices such as prescription of TAPAS - branding the shoulders with the marks of Vishnu's Chakra and Sankha, Discus and Conch, the wearing of the Urdhva pundra, vertical marks particularly on the forehead and also on some other parts of the body, initiation into the secrets of Srivaishnava Mantras such as Dvadasakshara, Ashtakshara, Hayagrivamantra etc., and regulation of Vaishnava's life and daily routine primarily created an *esprit de corps* - particularly at a time when general practices were loose and unreligious. It must be remembered however that the Panca samskaras were not mere patent symbols invented to bring about an *esprit de crops*. They do have essentially high philosophical and spiritual significance. In fact reference to Pancasamskara is made in the Bhishma Parva of the Mahabharata (Chap. 66) -

' Brahmanaih Kshatriyaih Vai Shvshyaih Sudraisca Kruta-lakshanaih '

' Arcaniyasca sevyasca nityayuktaih svakarmasu '

' Dvaparasya yugasyante adau Kaliyugasya ca '

' Satvatam vidhimasthaya gatih Samkarshanena yah '

The very elaborate Vriddha harita smriti contains a full exposition of the Srivaishnavasamskaras. Various Srivaishnava practices are also mentioned in the Saccaritra Raksha of Sri Vedanta Desika.

The Pancaratra Agama is based on the firm conviction that the ultimate Reality is in the one and the only God namely Vishnu who is invariably associated with Lakshmi and hence always called ' Srimannarayana ' - His permanent and exclusive residence is Vaikuntha. His consorts are said to be Sri, Bhumi and Nila. His eternally existing companions are the ' Nitya Suris ' such as Anantha, Garuda and Vishvaksena. This Narayana

appears in His Four Vyuhas and twelve other subsidiary forms, in all sixteen. His ornaments and weapons are all specified and typed. They are also conceived by his attendant Nityas. They are his body-guards. It is recognised in the Pancaratra Samhitas that the consorts, ornaments and weapons, as also his attendant Nityas that form His body-guards are none other than representatives of the various tattvas - very prominent and effective in their roles.

The very forms of Vishnu as conceived and detailed in the Pancaratra Agamas may not have been actually worshipped in the temples of India. Aniruddha and Pradyumna as such are not actually worshipped. Vasudeva may not be the actual name of the deity worshipped. As Krishna, an incarnation He is mostly worshipped. Similarly Samkarshana is not veritably worshipped by that name. Samkarshana as Balarama the brother of Krishna incarnation is worshipped only in Puri and a few other temples such as near Udipi. (Of course Balarama does not actually represent the second Vyuha). The Vyuha worship as such might not have been in vogue in temples. Even now we don't come across them normally in any temple worship. Yet we came across innumerable Vaishnava shrines with idols representing the various incarnations of Vishnu. The images of the consorts of Vishnu such as Sri, Bhumi and Nila and also of the Nitya attendants of Vishnu such as Ananta, Garuda and Vishvaksena are to be found in almost all the temples of Vishnu. There is no temple without the idol of Vinayaka while the images of Hanuman are found all over the land. Of late Srivaishnava shrines with Pancaratra traditions have the images of Alwars and Acharyas also. The Pancaratra Agama has very much influenced the Visishtadvaita philosophy and the Vaishnava tradition. In fact it forms the hard core of Srivaishnavism. It is the Pancaratra concepts of Avatara, of Para, Vyuha, Vibhava, Harda and Arca forms, of worship of God in man in terms of Antaryamitva and of images of God in temples that form a dominant part of the cultural heritage of India. Even Kalidasa, an ardent Srivaishnavite refers to the Pancaratra doctrines in Raghuvamsa

Canto X verses 8-32. Idolatry and temple worship are the forte of the Pancaratra agamas. Incidentally they are the cynosure of the Pancaratras also. The greatest of men, the Saints and particularly the Alwars have rejoiced and revelled in the worship of God in Arcavatars - in the form of installed and consecrated images in various temples. These Alwars in particular have never viewed the worship of images as of an inferior discipline meant only for the ' Aprabuddhas ', the unawakened or the unenlightened - says Desika in his ' Varadaraja Pancasat ' - 17.

' Vishvatishayi sukharupa yadatmakastvam '

' Vyaktim karisha kathayanti tadatmikante '

' Yenadhirohati matistvadupasakanam, '

'Sakim tvameva tavaveti vitarka dolam'.

The idol, the image of the deity may be made of stone, metal wood or even mortar - But the material component of the image is not bare Prakriti or ordinary matter. It is said to obtain 'Suddhasattva' character after consecration by the invisible effect of installation, Pratishta ceremony and also by the presence of the deity in it.

The Gita verse also points to the same effect:

' Ajopi sannavyayatma bhutanam Isvaropi san '

' Prakritam svam adhishtaya sambhavami atmamayaya '.

The material of a consecrated and installed image is not ordinary matter constituted by Sattva, Rajas and Tamas, but superior or pure matter called suddhasattva, sattva matter or ethereal matter.

Both the Pancaratra and Vaikhanasa similar to the Saiva and other agamas are founded on the firm Hindu religious belief that the Deity enters or appropriates the duly consecrated image. It is the spiritual presence in the image, not the image itself that is the object of worship though the material of the image according to the accepted theory as averred to above is transported into Suddhasattva or unalloyed pure matter by the prescribed ceremonies of consecration. Hence temple construction, consecration and installation of images, temple rituals and

'utsavas ' are very important topics under the ' Kriyapada ' of the Agamas.

The Alwars in particular extol idolatry and temple worship for the simple reason that God's presence is brought into the idol consecrated and the temple is made the abode of God, the heaven on earth as it contains within itself the living presence of the Holy as conceived in terms of His avatara or descent or in terms of His choice revelation to the seers and sages. This fecilitates Prapatti, absolute surrender to the will of God. It helps face-to-face surrender to the Almighty in the form and person of the idol installed. God can no longer keep Himself out of sight from man, can no longer hide Himself in His ivory tower of a Paramapada. He is brought to the public forum and is made easily accessible to any petitioner. But for this concept of 'Arcavatara ', the presence of the Holy in the image consecrated, the Srivaishnava concept of Prapatti, Sharanagati, as the surest means to Salvation could not have had an extensive circulation , nor could it have the most popular appeal, absolute validity or universal leverage. The concept of Prapatti is not indigenous or peculiar to Pancaratra only. In Svetasvatara Upanishad VI - 18 ,

' Yo brahmanam vidadhati purvam,
Yo Vaivedamsca prahinoti tasmai. .
Tam ha devam atma-buddhi-prakasam mumukshur vai
Saranam aham prapadye ' -

The crowning verse of the Gita strikes the same note:

' Sarvadharman Parityajya mamekam saranam Vraja
Aham tvam sarva papebhyo moksha ishyami ma sucah'.

This Sharanagati, Pancaratra has wonderfully elaborated by elevating Lakshmi the consort of God as the *mediator* - PURUSHAKARA - a necessary expedient or catalytic agent to reconcile the strict justice of god with the aspirations for release by the sinner. God's Nigraha - desire for meeting out deserved punishment is tempered by Lakshmi's mercy, modified or

neutralised by the intercession of Lakshmi who is titled Nityamajnata-nigraha- who never knows what it is to punish - who is all mercy, tenderness and forgiveness, the mother *par excellence.* As Desika says :

'Asti karmarha phaladepatyam krutadvayam sriyah'
Nigrahadvanam kale sandhukshanamanugrahe' -

The nature and attributes of goddess Lakshmi and her place in the work of Almighty are described fully in the Pancaratra and also in Vishnupurana.

Indra praises Lakshmi in Vishnupurana (1-9-110)

'Yajna Vidya mahavidya guhyavidya ca shobane'
Atma Vidya ca devi tvam vimukti phala dayani'.
Again in - 1-9-116,
'Tvam mata sarvalokanam devadevo harih pita'
Tvayyai tadvishnu na chamva jagavyaptam
caracaram' Also in - 1-9-144,
'Raghavatve bhavatsita Rukmini Krishnajanmani'
Manyeshu cavatareshu Vishnoreshanapayini'

Desika quotes further from the vedic Suktas which go by the names of Srisukta, Sraddhasukta, Medhasukta and Aditisukta, from Upanishads like the Taittiriya and also from the Pancaratra Samhitas such as Hiranyagarbha, Kashyapa, Manakana, Dhanada as authorities for the Hindu theory of Mediation by Goddess Lakshmi on behalf of the individual soul. This mediator for us like the son of God for the Christians, is part and parcel of God Himself - But unlike Jesus Christ, she does not mediate once for all humanity, not does the suffer herself on behalf of humanity as in the Christian Crucifixion. Goddess Lakshmi can be invoked by any individual at any time whenever he reaches the state of mind that leads him to make Self-surrender to God. Lakshmi is like all merciful mother to man who can be appealed to whenever he is in distress. Lakshmi prapatti is invariably a necessary prelude to Bhagavat prapatti. This all merciful concept

has been elaborated by all the Acharyas from Yamunacharya downwards. It is one of the most salient features of the Pancaratra, so much so in every temple, the devotee has to first offer his obeisance to Laksmi and then only visit the sanctum sanctorum of the Lord, the presiding deity. It is with the blessings and grace of the mother so to say he has to seek the father. That is the meaningful convention adopted by every Srivaishnava.

We observe that the Pancaratra and the Bhagavata school have successfully substituted genuine mental worship for the elaborate sacrificial worship enunciated in the Karma khanda of the Vedas. Without outright decrying actually the efficiency of sacrifices, the Pancaratra has acclaimed the superior efficiency of Dhyana, contemplation of God's forms and name, and God's attributes. This attitude was mooted even by the Upanishads and the Gita. For instance the Chandogya Upanishad - III - 16-17. After explaining how long life may be attained by construing the period of man's life as the morning, the mid-day and the third Savana or sacrifices, and meditating on the identity of the Vasus, Rudras and Aditya, the deities of the sacrifices with the pranas or life principles in the various stages, the Upanishad proceeds to state :

'Sa yadasisishati yat pipasati,
Yan na ramate, ta asya dikshah'

'Atha yad asnati, yat pibati, yad ramate tad upasadair eti'

'Atha yadd hasati yaj jakshati, yau maithunam carati, stutasastrair eva tad eti'

'Atha yat tapo danam arjavam ahimsa satya-vacanam iti' ta asya dakshinah'.

How man's life is itself a sacrifice and how a sacrifice can be performed without any ceremonial and in spirit only by the hermits is emphasised and outlined in the above lines. This type of a symbolic spiritualisation of material precepts is a common feature of many Upanishads. In this Upanishad Ghora Angirasa

is the preceptor and Krishna Devakiputra is the pupil who became thirstless - Apipasa - after receiving the instructions (whether it is Krishna of the Gita is immaterial). However it clearly indicates the change over to mental and heart worship instead of the endless ceremonialism.

The Bhagavadgita also embodies the same idea in Canto IV, verse 33 -

'Sreyan dravyamayat yajnat jnanayajnah Parantapa'
'Sarvam Karmakhilam partha jnane parisamapyate'

Mr. Partha, Jnanayajna in the form of knowledge and meditation is far superior to sacrifices performed with material things. All deeds without exception culminate in knowledge.

Thus a transformation was being brought about in the attitudes and doings of even the orthodox adherents of the Vedas Karmaphala sanyasa, Karmayoga, Anasaktiyoga was being indirectly underlined (Gita : XVIII - 46) and encouraged also.

'Yatah pravrittirbhutanam,
Yena sarvamidam tatam,
Svakarmana tamabhyarcya'.
Siddhim vindati manavah'.

By worshipping God, Him alone who is the source of all activities of all beings and who pervades everything in the Universe, man attains perfection through the fulfilment of his duties. What the Upanishads and the Gita aimed at, the Pancaratra has completely achieved in substituting mental worship through ordinary harmless symbolic ways of worship the elaborate sacrificial cults. ceremonials and arduous rituals of the Brahmana portion of the Vedas. Even the import and significance of the vedic rituals is streamlined to such an extent that the barter deal between Gods and men is completely removed, the unity of a Supreme Godhead, an all-merciful Father is restored and ample scope for worshipful meditation and sincere devotion is provided. The mercenary motive of the vedic rituals is completely removed the laborious sacrificial

transactions are outright struckoff as cognisable offences so to say and surrender to the Will of God is upheld. God is made accessible to man through love and devotion. Without in any way affecting the susceptibilities of the champions of the vedic sacrifices and rituals, a smooth change-over is made possible by the Pancaratra in replacing sacrificial ceremonials by temple rituals and Karma by Jnana and Bhakti.

The Pancayajna, Mahayajna as it is called by the Pancaratrins has completely displaced the vedic yajnas and their all-absorbing activities. In the concept of Pancayajna we have the worship of five so to say, of Gods, Pitris, beings in general, men in our midst and lastly the Rishis. It is the duty of man to express every time he satisfies his inner craving for food, his gratitude to God and His agents; it is his duty to be kind to animals and hospitable to fellow men. To mark the fact of his being an intellectual and moral being it is compulsory that daily he should devote some time to the study of the thoughts of Great men. The same idea is further emphasised in the five-fold duties inculcated in the Pancakala idea - every one of the daily duties of man being done with the thought of God and as a Divine mission. Thereby there can be no scope at all for any evil thoughts even, let alone vicious deeds. Special contemplation on God is also conceived during nights as an item of yoga. This is quite in consonance with the Gita idea as expressed in the verse : IX-27

'Yatkaroshi yadasnasi
'Yajjuhoshi dadasi yat'
'Yat tapasyasi Kaunteya
Tat kurushva madarpanam'.

The institution of 'Ekantya' and 'Pancakala Anushtana' is peculiar to Pancaratra. It upholds the glory of faith and absolute trust in God.

The concept of PARAMEKANTYA as emphasised in the Pancaratra is sublime indeed. The concept of Paramekantya as

expounded in the Pancaratras reiterates the message of the Gita namely Nishkama Karma and denouncing all worldly fruits. (Gita - 2-47, 18-65). The Paramekantya ideal insists on the abandonment of all Vratas and worship of all the minor deities. It is absolute faith and trust in one and only Supreme God as pronounced in the well-known Sruti:

'Ekam sadvipra bahudha vadanti'

Manu also refers to the same idea: 12 - 1123.

'Etameke Vadanti Agnim Manum anye Prajapatim'

'Indrameke Pare Pranam apare Brahmasasvatam'

The only ambition of the Paramekantin is salvation, reaching God's presence once for all.

Thus while being completely Vaidic, the Pancaratra agama has emphasised the worship of God as Narayana and has embellished the act of worship with the silver lining of trust, faith and surrender. It has made worship easier and simpler. It has inculcated the spirit of self-surrender to the will of God and thereby extolled Nishkamakarma, duty for duty's sake, in fact, every act for God's sake. In the process it has removed all the barbed fringes of vedic rituals and sacrifices such as caste distinctions, animal sacrifices, elaborate rituals and also the stigma of mercenary motives in the acts of worship. Above all it has made worship of God individualistic and personal. Everyone has his own freedom to seek God. He has direct access and is in need of no permit. More than the 'Arca' concept, the Baghavata concept of Antaryamitva has given added glory to the Pancaratra tenets. God is in man and in fact in everyone of His Creations. More than the worship of the Bhagavat, God Himself, the worship of the devotees of God, the Bhagavatas is the most pleasing to God Himself. That is why the Pancaratra tantra is referred to in the Narayaniya of the Mahabharata as the 'Mahopanishad'. As the Itihasa goes, Narada recited this Mahopanishad in the Badariashrama for the first time. This Pancaratra constituting the essence of the four vedas, the yoga and the samkhya systems was first sung by God Narayana

Himself to Narada : In Shanti Parva, Chapt. I,359 it is stated that Narayana Himself pronounced it to Narada.

' Pancaratrasya kristnasya Vakta Narayanah svayam '

Prof. Jacobi says ' that the ancient Bhagavata cult dates from a period long anterior to the rise of Jainism in the 8th century B.C., He thinks that the Ajivakas referred to in the earlier Jaina and Buddhist works must have been Bhagavatas of the Vaishnavite school. Whatever this may be, that Pancaratra is an ancient school and that the tenets of the Pancaratra have affected deeply the beliefs, habits and thought of a large class of people in early times, nobody can gainsay. The Narayaniya of the Mahabharata is itself a testimony :

In Chapt. 353 - It is said

' Idham satasahasradhi bharatakhyana vistarat '

' Amathyamathimanthanam jnanodadhi manuttamam '

' Navanitam yatha dadhno malayachandanam yatha '

' Aranyakamca vedebhyah oshadibhyo amritam yatha '-

The Narayaniya of the Shantiparva in which these texts occur is a story of Narada's exploitation in the ' Sveta dvipa' - (the white - island), the abode of Narayana where all the residents were said to be Ekantins - the worshippers of Vishnu only. As the Itihasa goes Narada for a glimpse of Bhagavan Narayana Himself. Narayana is then said to have instructed him in the truths of His own nature - His four-fold forms of Vasudeva, Samkarshana, Pradyumna and Aniruddha and finally taught him the extensive Pancaratra agama.

Modern scholars are of the opinion that there are three streams of worship that have culminated in modern Srivaishnavism namely :

i. The ancient vedic worship of Narayana or Vishnu,

ii. The worship of Vasudeva and the four Vyuhas taught in the Pancaratra samhitas proper,

iii. The so called Krishna cult - deification and identification of Krishna the cow-herd king with Vasudeva and Narayana of the two previous cults. (Krishna is considered to be an Avatara of Vishnu).

Of course there are a few suktas referring to Vishnu as a Rigvedic God:

Pancaratra or Bhagavata system is also called Sattvata system - i.e. connected with the family of Sattvata of which Sri Krishna is supposed to be a descendent. This means that the Pancaratra system was prior to Krishna's times and anterior to the time of Krishna himself. Further it also means that Samkarshaṅa one of the Vyuhas could not have been derived from the name of Balarama, Krishna's brother.

Curiously there is no direct reference in the Bhagavadgita to the Pancaratra or the Bhagavata cult. The name of Vasudeva is referred to only once in the passage of the Gita namely - 'Vasudevah sarvamiti samahatma sudurlabhah' VII-19. This clearly refers to the speaker himself as supreme being and Vasudeva as is obvious from the other passage - Vrishninam Vasudevosmi ' - X-37. - This makes no reference to Vasudeva of the Pancaratra system. Prof. T.Rajagopalachari writes -

" There is no foundation it seems to me for the suggestion of scholars that the Bhagavadgita is especially a Pancaratra text book or that the writer was a Pancaratrin bent on extolling Sri Krishna as identical with Vasudeva of the Pancaratra. At the same time it would be rash to suppose that the Bhagavata doctrines were unknown to the author of the Bhagavadgita or that they originated later than the date of the composition of this work. There seems to be a studied attempt in the Bhagavadgita to represent no sharp contrast of views in the matter of worship of deities other than Sri Krishna himself. There is only a general condemnation of the worship of inferior deities as being futile. The Samkhya and yoga doctrines are presented as each commendable by itself though the attempt to bring them into line

with the teaching of the Gita is successfully made in the earlier chapters. The only conclusion we can safely draw is that the Pancaratra system is of earlier date than the Mahabharata and the Bhagavadgita whether the works are regarded as contemporaneous or as of different dates".

Pancaratra has done the greatest service to Hinduism. It has strongly reacted against the polytheism and speculative Pantheism of the vedas. It has emphasised monotheism in the form and person of a supreme deity namely Narayana as the ultimate Reality. More than being the Creator of the Universe He has been characterised as a father with abundant mercy and grace. Pancaratra has not only divested the Vedas of innumerable Gods, it has provided an effective check against the enormous proliferations of the vedic rituals. It has given a meaningful symbolic significance to the vedic rituals and has actually made them not only elegant but also charming and easy with a soul-stirring appeal. It is because of the impact of the Pancaratras on the vedas, that the Bhakti sutras of Narada and Sandilya have been made possible. The Pancaratra agama picked up the concepts of Bhakti in the Vedas, enlarged them and made them the universal means of worshipping a monotheistic God. The Pancaratra tantra gave its votaries a God who could be loved and adored. While Buddhism decried the vedic Gods and impeached the vedic sacrifices, it went the way of atheism. Even after dethroning the vedic Gods and levelling up the castes Buddhism could not continue to hold the masses in leash. The average Hindu could be without the vedas and its ritualistic and sacrificial lore. But he could not be without a God to be worshipped and adored. That was the weakest point in Buddhism. That was why later on Shaktaism coloured Buddhism and there ensued Mahayanism which substituted Buddha himself an object of worship and made the very denier of God, a God himself. Where Buddhism failed to achieve its objectives of doing away with innumerable Gods and vedic sacrifices and rituals in an outright fashion to the satisfaction of all its followers, the Pancaratra scored an enduring victory by not

adopting an outright scorched earth policy in so far as the vedic lore was concerned, but by winning over popular appeal in the ways of moulding vedic rituals on a sanguine and salutary basis, in maintaining similarity of form but change of content and in transforming the entire attitude of the worshipper from compelling the God to meet his demands to a reverential and loving approach. Even the nature of the petitions was completely changed. It was not for mundane pleasures that God would be appealed to. It was for His loving grace and for Salvation. Thus the Pancaratra was able to bring about an outright reformation in the thoughts, attitudes and deeds of its followers unlike Buddhism, which aimed at a rebellion and a revolt.

In fact much of the ideas of the Visishtadvaita philosophy of the Srivaishnavas is directly or indirectly influenced by the Pancaratra tenets. Vasudeva is conceived as the only one ultimate God to be worshipped. Everyone of one's daily routine duties is taken to be an act of worship of Vasudeva. One's living existence is itself taken to be a saga of dedication and devotion to God. In encouraging the worship of a personal God as the embodiment of all the moral and spiritual values, Pancaratra has been a corrective to Sankara's Mayavada also .

The Pancaratra samhitas are in fact numerous and said to number over 200. Several samhitas have been printed, such as Isvara, Kapinjala, Parasara, Padma, Bharadwaja, Lakshmi, Vishnutilaka, Sattvata , Ahirbudhnya, Brihad Brahma samhita etc. Reference to many samhitas are made in Pancaratra Raksha of Desika and also in the agama pramanya of Yamuna of the 10th century. Reference to Pancaratra adhikarana is made in the Brahmasutras of Badarayana 11. 2/39 to 42. Ramanuja and Sankara have both commented on the Sutras. The great scholar Desika seems to have had access to more than 50 samhitas and he quotes from all of them freely. (Desika was the contemporary of Vidyaranya). Of all the Pancaratra samhitas, Sattvata, Paushkara and Jayakhya are considered by the orthodox as the three jewels of the Pancaratra agama as they are supposed to have emanated directly from the deity while the others are

supposed to be just inspired by Him, such as the Padma, Kalottama, Paramesvara, Ahirbudhnya, Sanatkumara, Srikara, Padmodbhava, Isvara, Naradiya etc.

Desika in his 'Raksha' says that the Pancaratra samhitas were classified in various ways.

i. One classification was into 4 siddhantas :

a) The Agama siddhanta c) The Tantra siddhanta
b) The Mantra siddhanta d) The Tantrantara siddhanta

It is also pointed out that while the first one, the agama siddhanta is directed to Salvation only, the others help to secure not only Salvation but also other fruits as well prior to it.

ii. Another classification of the siddhanta is into the following four based on the historical origin of the shrines to which the several classes of works apply :

a) Divya c) Sāiddha
b) Svayam Vyakta d) Arsha.

iii. There is still another classification into

a) Divya c) Rajasa
b) Sattvika d) Tamasa.

This classification means to imply that those samhitas that are directly uttered by God are the Divya siddhantas and that the rest belong to the utterances of Rishis in various degrees of enlightenment.

'Divyam nama sakshat Bhagavatpranitam Brahmarudrabhih pravartitam - munibhashitam tu Sattvika - Rajasa - Tamasatmana tridha -

' Bhagavatah srutarthasya kevala pratipadakam satvikam.'

' Yekadesato bhagavatah srutam svayoga mahima siddham cavasishtam Rajasam'

'Svayogamahimopalabdharthaih upanibaddham Tamasam'

'Divyamunibhashitabhyam vyatiriktam manujaih pranitam manusham' - Pancaratra Raksha -

A list has also been given of the Samhitas coming under each class:

The various Samhitas classify their topics as usual into

i. Jnana Pada	-	Section on Knowledge,
ii. Yoga Pada	-	Section on meditation,
iii. Kriya Pada	-	Section on constuction of temples and establishment of images.
iv. Carya Pada	-	Section on Samskaras - modes of worship and their significance.

Many of the Pancaratra samhitas deal with details of engineering skill in the construction of temples. They give beautiful discourses on town planning, architecture and many other allied technical subjects that need detailed study and research.

Even the details of worship as delineated in the Pancaratras have many spiritual and psychological significance if only we probe into them with our knowledge of science and psychology. Also there are discourses on the ethics and daily discipline of not only the Srivaishnavas but also the Arcakas of temples. The codes of conduct prescribed are highly laudatory and meaningful.

About the date of the Agamas, it is very difficult to pin it down as it is in the case of the Srutis, Smritis and other cognate subjects. The orthodox Vaishnavite as already pointed out believes that they were revealed by Bhagavan Narayana Himself. One can with difficulty fix the later limits of the Agamas. But to fix the earlier limits it is almost impossible as in the case of the Vedas and we have to bear in mind that the agamas like the Pancaratra presuppose the Vedas and the Upanishads. This much can be fairly concluded that the Agamas are prior to Patanjali (150.B.C. and Panini 4th century B.C.). An inscription of the

2nd century B.C. has been discovered which refers to the worship of Vasudeva and Samkarshana, two of the four forms of Narayana called His Vyuha forms . It is obvious then that the literature inculcating this worship must be atleast a few centuries earlier to the inscriptions found

Finally, by the way we come across ancient temples throughout the length and breadth of India we can safely conclude it was the Pancaratra agamas that brought about an emotional integration among the masses of Hindu India from times immemorial to the present day. It is the institution of temples that has been the greatest socialising force. The temple has not only been the abode of God on earth and the place of worship, it has also made possible great concourses of Hindus during festival occasions. They have been responsible for pilgrimages. Incidentally they have been the long standing nurseries of Indian art and architecture. But for the institution of temples ancient fine arts, drama, dance and music would not have been encouraged and cultured and we would not have had the privilege of the great cultural heritage of which we are proud even to the present day.

THE LAST PHASE OF THE COSMIC NIGHT

(PURUSHĪ RATRI) AND AGAIN

THE DAWN OF THE DAY OF BRAHMAN WITH THE BIRTH OF LAKSHMI

JUST AS HINDU Philosophy believes in an eternal cycle of births, deaths, re-births and re-deaths so far as an individual is concerned, so also it believes in an eternal cycle of cosmic evolution and dissolution, of cosmic days and of cosmic nights. At the dawn of the cosmic day, the day of the Brahman there starts the jubilant and juggling process of Creation. The vast panorama of the entire Universe is majestically evolved. The jostling original Tattvas, such as matter, force and energy are formed. The stage is set for life's drama to be enacted in the Cosmos. The actors, the individual souls are also proliferated in unaccountable numbers from Brahman Himself - The curtain is lifted and the Cosmic drama goes on and on in a weary way. It is only when Brahma's day ceases to persist any more, when the curtain is wrung down and when the Cosmic night begins, there begins the involution of all the manifestations, the great dissolution, PRALAYA what the Hindus call. Everything is retracted back, reabsorbed in Brahman. All over there are waters, water, water everywhere and darkness all around. That is eternal darkness, the long night so to say of Brahman, Dirgha Tamas.

In the Nasadiya hymn of Rigveda it is said that at the beginning there was an utter darkness, an impenetrable void, neither being nor non-being, a chaotic cataclysm. There was nothing except the ONE - TADEKAM- the Brahman which breathed breathless by its own power.

The same idea is expressed in the Tantras. In the last stages of the Cosmic night, Layantima, there was a state of pure vacuity or nothingness - Sunyatva - Rupini- as there was no manifestation of any kind. Everything was in a sub-merged or suspended state. The manifold world of Creation was asleep as it were. There was absolute calm and poise all over similar to an ocean when there are no waves tossing about and ruffling its breast. In this weird calm and uncanny equilibrium even the undissociable attributes of God and His energy were absolutely suspended. Nullity and Fullness together existed.

' Purnamadah Purnamidam purnat-puranam udacyate'

' Purnasya Purnamadaya Purnameva avasishyate'.

In the Nasadiya hymn it is stated that by the fervour and passion of austerity, by Desire, KAMA , the ' That One' began to evolve. This desire to become many again, was purely due to the Will of the ' That One'. It is stated in the hymn, that it was 'Manaso - Retah' - the will born out of itself - Why that ' Will to Evolve' even the vedic seers are unable to explain and simply exclaim - ' Ko-Veda? who knows.

The same idea is expressed in the Agamas also, but in a more sophisticated and pragmatic way. From out of this threatening calmness of Brahman, there darts forth a Samkalpa, a Will to Create. As though by His own command, by His own Samkalpa, there emerges from the calmness of Brahman, like the flash of a lightning in the sky, the Sakti of Vishnu. This Shakti of Vishnu which has emitted out of the darkness or streamed out of the emptiness of Brahman Himself so to say is called LAKSHMI. With this Emission of Lakshmi, the energy of Eternal Brahman, a bang is given for the process of creation to start. In other words Lakshmi which was in Brahman all the while and thus far indistinguishable from Brahman, all of a sudden by her own freedom (Kasmaccit svatantryat) darts out so to say like a streak of lightning with an infinitesimal part of herself and in a dual role of ' Acting' - KRIYA and ' Becoming' - BHUTI. - i.e. in her double aspects of Force and Matter.

'Ya sa saktirmahasatta Vishnostudharma dharmini'
'Ta-syah Kotyarbudamsena shakti dve kathite tava'
A.S.14-7

'Bhutisceti Kriyasceti bhavya-bhavaka samjnite'
'Bhutih sa kriyaya jvala matuteva pranartyate'A.S.14-8

Of these two aspects of Lakshmi who is herself an aspect of Brahman, as flashed out of Vishnu, as an emission from Brahman, this Bhuti Shakti is seen to include SOUL also.

Reference: Lakshmi Tantra - IV - 4.

'Tat Sudarshana unmesha nimeshanukritatmana' A.S.8-36
'Yatô Jagaḍbhavishyanti kvaçit unmesham riççhati'
'Sahasrāyutakôtyoghakotikotyarbudam'saka,' A.S.3-27.
'Lakshmimayah samunmeshah sa dvidha vyavatishtate'
'Kriyabhutivibedhena bhutih sa ca tridha mata' A.S. 3-28.

Thus from Brahman emanates Lakshmi in the two-fold form. KRIYA and BHUTI.

Kriya Sakti is usually symbolised by the Sudarshana or DISCUS because it is held that Kriya Shakti is none other than the Sudarshana aspect of Lakshmi. It is identical with Vishnu's 'Will-to-be'.

This Kriya Sakti is considered to be quite independent of Space and Time also (Desakaladika vyaptis tasya Sudarshanasya) and is there regarded as Undivided unlike Bhuti Sakti which is said to be nanabhedavati, full of differentiations.

'Nānabhedavati bhuteh Vibhutih kathita pura' A.S. 14-9.

In fact Kriya and Bhuti are themselves said to be mutually related in so many ways. One of the relations alluded to Kriya sakti in relation to Bhuti sakti is that of a running thread to a necklace of pearls or that of a pin holding together a bunch of leaves. In this context we are reminded of the simile given in the Bhagavadgita, " Sutre manigana iva"

Reference : Chapters: III, V, & IX.

In the entire Pancaratra philosophy the transcendent aspect of Vishnu, Vishnu as Para-Vasudevan or Para-Brahman is always in the background - in its own IVORY tower so to say.

The entire world is brought about by the Shakti of Brahman (Of course the Samkalpa or the Will of Brahman is in the background) and all the affairs of the world are manoeuvered and practically controlled once again by this One Force that has shot out of this Paravasudevan namely Lakshmi in her two aspects of Kriya and Bhuti. .

It is this Lakshmi as Bhuti that becomes the entire material Universe. It is this Lakshmi again as Kriya that vitalises and governs this Lakshmi as Bhuti.

Kriyashakti is typed as Sudarshana, the Elan Vital of Vishnu, the energising force, the power and instrument of Vishnu - It is the ever pulsating vital force that is to be found in everything of this Universe. It is the Bhavaka Shakti. .

Bhutishakti is the manifest Universe as such inclusive of all the animate and inanimate beings. It is the Bhavyashakti. Thus we can easily observe that the total Universe and the whole Truth about this Saga of existence is constituted of three ultimate realities namely Vishnu, Kriyashakti and Bhutishakti and all these three varieties can even be finally reduced to the One and the Only Ultimate Reality namely BRAHMAN called Vishnu by the Pancaratras.

Although Lakshmi was in Brahman Himself and has just emitted herself out of Brahman, the two are considered as distinct from each other though inseparable from one another. The relation between Vishnu (Brahman) and Lakshmi is mostly of Aprithaksiddhi character, one of inherence or inseparable connection, Avinobhava or Samanvaya as emphasised by Lakshmi Tantra. II. 17. This inseparable though distinguishable character of Lakshmi is likened to the Aprithaksiddhi relation as between an attribute and a substance, Dharma and Dharmin; as

between existence and that which exists, Bhava and Bhavat; as between the egoity and ego, Ahamta and Aham; as between the Moonshine and the Moon, Sunshine and the Sun. In Valmiki's Ramayana this idea of inherence is beautifully brought about by the reported words of Sita (Lakshmi) in relation to Rama (Vishnu) -

" Ananya Raghavenaham Bhaskarasya Prabha yatha"

I am no different from Rama in the same way as Sunshine is no different from the Sun -

This idea of inseparability in spite of distinction is very well brought about in the second and the fourth chapters of Lakshmi Tantra and Ahirbudhnya Samhita respectively. Though there is thus the apparent dualism between Vishnu and Lakshmi, the Lord and his consort Shakti, there is the happy compromise of identity at the source, at the level of Vishnu as the transcendent ultimate One and Only Reality.

His aspect of Shakti, namely Lakshmi alone acts and brings about the manifestation of the Universe of course at the behest of her Lord as whatever she does is just the expression of Vishnu's wishes.

This Kriya shakti is described in many ways: It is designated as Vishnu's resolve in respect of life and the living forces.

' Prana-rupo Vishnoh Samkalpah'

It is considered the pulsating force that keeps existence agoing -

' Bhuti Parivartaka'

It is that which helps change , makes becoming possible

' Bhutim Sambhavayati'

It is that which at the time of creation connects matter to the faculty of evolving ,

Connects time to the work of computing

Correlates the soul to the effort for enjoyment .

It is regarded as that which preserves all the three, Matter, Time and Soul so long as the world lasts till the time of

dissolution. Once again it is considered as that which finally withdraws all the faculties at the time of dissolution.

In short Kriya shakti is the real booster to the Universe. It is the impelling force that keeps agoing the Bhuti sakti, the Vibhuti part of Shakti namely the entire Universe of souls and matter. It is compared to the *Wind* that keeps moving the clouds or that keeps helping a fire aglow. It keeps the Universe vibrating alive, keeps it bouncing and dancing (Pranartyate). Keeps it active and agile.

'Bhutih sa Kriyaya jvala maruteva pranartyate'

That Lakshmi is a power of God and a power in reality is proved in the following way:

'Saktyah sarvabhavanam achintya aprithak sthitah'

'Svarupenaiva drisyante karyatastu tah'

'Sukshmavastha hi sā tesham sarvabhavanugamini'

'Idantya Vidhatrum sa na nishedhum ca śakyate'

The powers of all things are in themselves of an enexplicable nature and they cannot exist separately (a-prithak sthita) from the substances in which they inhere. They are just the potential or the subtle states of the substance itself. They are not perceived separately from the substances and in themselves. They cannot in fact be perceived separately from the substances in which they inhere and they cannot be therefore defined as 'this' or as ' not this' in any way. They can only be known from their effects. In the same the power of Brahman namely Lakshmi. She can be known only from her effects namely this manifestation of the Universe. (The power of combustibility in wood or the content of butter in milk cannot be perceived by itself except in the effect of lighting it or converting it into curds and churning it afterwards). With this power of Lakshmi Brahman is always engaged in an eternal act of Creation, untired, unfatigued, unending and unaided by any other agent.

'Satatam Kurvato Jagat'

This Shakti of God is spontaneous and the entire Universe is but a manifestation of this power of God. This Shakti is also called Ananda, Bliss because it does not depend on anything (Nirapekshatyananda). This Shakti is eternal (Nitya) because it is not limited in Time. It is full (Purna) because it is not limited by any form as it itself makes possible both Time and Form, Time and Space. It manifests itself as the world and therefore it is called Lakshmi. -

' Jagattaya Lakshyamānā sā Laksmir iti giyate' -

It is this very same Vishnu Shakti, the supreme power of God that contracts into the form of the world later and then called KUNDALINI. This power, this Lakshmi though in reality different from Brahman is always One with Brahman, inseparable from Him .

The only reason given for the emergence of Lakshmi from the absolute calmness of Brahman who is completely self-dependent is of course the Will of Brahman, His Samkalpa to Create. Otherwise we cannot explain how it suddenly changes itself from a potential to an actual or kinetic state.

'Tasya staimitya-rūpā yā saktih sunyatva-rupini '

'Svatantryadeva kasmac cit kaacit sonmesham Ricchati'

'Atma-bhuta hi ya saktih parasya Brahmano harch '

So from its own spontaneity Lakshmi bursts forth from the calmness of the void and turns herself into active operations. this power of God though differentiated from Brahman is regarded as being His very nature. Only when it comes out into activity can it be recognised as Power or Shakti. When embedded in a latent form along with the other qualities of God it is indistinguishable from the Lord Himself.

As already averred to this Power manifests itself in two ways - as static entities such as Avyakta, Kala and Purusha and also primarily and essentially as activity. It is also well emphasised that this Shakti as Kriya, Power of God as activity is

spontaneous - of the nature of Will and Thought resulting in action.

'Svatantryamula icchātmā prekshārupah kriyā-phalah'

This Kriya is also called Samkalpa or the idea which is irresistible in its movement whereby it produces all material objects and spiritual entities such as Avyakta, Kala and Purusha.

'Unmesho yah susamkalpah sarvatravyaktah kratau'

' Avyakta-kala -pum-rupam cetana-acetana -atmikām'

It is this power designated otherwise as Lakshmi or Vishnu Shakti that impels Avyakta into the course of Evolution and Purusha to confront the products of Prakriti and run through the gamut of experiences.

When actually she withdraws these functions from these entities there is Pralaya or Dissolution. It is by the force of this power that at the time of Creation, the Prakriti as the composite of the three Gunas is urged into Creative evolution.

The association of the Purusha with the Prakriti also is brought about by the same power.

This idea (Samkalpa) is therefore the original and the primordial thrust given and it is vibratory by nature; it assumes diverse forms and by its various fulgurations and transformations produces various categories.

'Soyam Sudarshanam nama samkalpah spandanatmakah'

'Vibhajya bahudhā rupam bhave bhavevathishtathe'

So it is this power, Kriya Shakti that causes as its own transformation all categories pure and impure, all material forms, everything of the objective Universe as emanations from out of itself.

It manifests itself as

The Kriya	The Tejas and
The Virya	The Bala of God.

All the qualities are mere forms of its own expression and it expresses itself in all forms of duality as subject and object, as matter and consciousness, as pure and impure, as the enjoyer and the enjoyed, as the experiencer and the experienced and so on.

When it (this power) moves in the progressive order there is Evolution, Evolutionary Creation. When it moves in the reverse order there is Involution leading finally to Dissolution. It is in fact from pairs of two different functions of this power the different forms of Pure creation are evolved subsequently and come into being such as the Vyuhas.

This power that has shot up from Brahman and regarded as the Ultimate Eternal power of Vishnu is also called by names such as Gauri, Sarasvati and Dhenu. It is again this power as Lakshmi that manifests itself as the three important Vyuhas, Samkarshana, Pradyumna and Aniruddha. These separate powers as Vyuhas are perceivable only when they manifest themselves. When they are not manifest but latent they exist in God himself as His great Supreme Power namely Lakshmi.

It is once again this Lakshmi that is called Brahma, Vishnu and Siva Similarly the VYAKTI, AVYAKTI, PURUSHA and KALA, the Samkhya and the Yoga - all are represented in Lakshmi.

Once again Lakshmi is regarded as the Ultimate Supreme Power in which all the others finally resolve themselves. Sometimes as distinct from the other four manifested powers of God in the form of the the four Vyuhas, Lakshmi is often typed as the fifth power.

Even the Liberated Souls are said to enter into this Lakshmi who is sometimes regarded as the highest abode of Vishnu-Param Dhama or Paramam Padam.

This Power (Shakti) is considered as having an inner feeling of Bliss and is designated as the BHAVA form of Vishnu and also the shining or UJJVALA form of Vishnu.

Lakshmi is often attributed with five responsibilities and is regarded as discharging the five functions - Panca Kriyā - Karī - as the following:

i Creation,
ii. Sustenance,
iii. Destruction or Dissolution,
iv. Grace,
v. Disfavour.

The Supreme Brahman as associated with this Lakshmi is called the Highest Vishnu as distinguished from the lower form of Vishnu namely the usually called God of maintenance.

This Lakshmi as Shakti essentially is said to be always in a state of internal agitation naturally, although this state of agitation may not be perceivable as such from its outward appearance In fact it is reported that the internal reverberations, agitation and movement are so subtle that to all intents it would appear as though it is in a state of absolute calm like the ocean.

'Nirvyapareva sa bhati staimityam iva codadheh'

'Tayai Vopahitam Brahma Nirvikalpam Niranjanam '

A.S. 11-47.

Often this Shakti is also called the MAYA of Vishnu.

'Mayascarya - Karatvena panca - kritya kari - sada' -

It is a part of this power, this Shakti that transforms itself as the BHAVYA and the BHAVAKA shakti. The Bhavya of course shows itself as the world. The Bhavaka shakti is also known by the name of Sudarshana - the thought - activity by which the concept shows itself in the ideal and in the objective world as thought and its significance, namely the object - Everything is the epitome of the power of this SUDARSHANA. When all the external activity of the objective universe is ideally grasped we find in it the manifestation of the power of Sudarshana which is none other than the Supreme Thought - activity of God. In short all the causality of the objective world, the moving force is but a mode of the manifestation of the Sudarshana power.

Thus not only all the activities and movements of the external world of nature and the movement implied in thought and speech but even the subjective - objective movement by which the world is held together in thought and speech are the patent manifestation of this Sudarshana power. In fact all expressions or manifestations are either in the way of qualities or actions and both obviously are the manifestations of this Sudarshana power of God.

Our words can only signify the two ways of being - thought and activity. For this reason they refer only to the Sudarshana which is attributive of God but cannot obviously express the nature of God. Words therefore cannot reveal the nature of God. The word may hold the Universe within it as its mystic symbol and may represent within it all its energies; but in any case - though it may engulf within itself the whole Universe and secure the merging of the Universe in itself and can identify itself with God, such identification emphatically can only be with the Sudarshana Power of God

Once again as a corollary entrance into God and the Realisation of Him (Salvation) through the word or thought can only be possible through the Sudarshana power which is a part of Lakshmi herself

Thus as an upshot unity with God or God realisation can only mean union with Sudarshana or entrance into Lakshmi

'Atyantalpalpakamsena sa svaineva vibhavyate'

'Bhavyabavakabhedena bhavya bhutih sitetara'

'Bhavako Vishnusamkalpah Sudarshanasamahvayah'

'Bhutih sabdyarthabhedena dvidha purva pravartate'

'Sabdasya sabdanam yattadartham prati nirupyate'

'Tatkriyarupato jneyam sandarshanamayam vapuh'

'Sabdabhavo hi yorthasya karmibhavasamavayah'

'Sopi kriyatmabhavena sudarshanamayah smritah'

'Atah spandamayo Vishnoryah samkalpah sudarshanam'

'Tanmayyeva kriyā sarva karakastha na samsayah'
'Sarvah sabdasca sarvasca vachyo dvedhā pravartate'
'Gunena karmanā vāpi vidhānyā naiva vidyate'
A.S.51-72-77

It is presumed that the world has come into being from the *Sudarshana's power.*

Therefore everything in the world including all the natural, physical and other kinds of energies and all powers of all things in the world are but the *manifestations of the Sudarshana.* The power of the Sudarshana also manifests itself in the form of all living beings, in the form of all inanimate objects and also in the form of emancipation.

Thus Sudarshana is everything from the beginning to the end so far as the manifest Universe is concerned - *Whatever is able to produce* is to be regarded as the manifestation of Sudarshana.

'Sudarshanahvaya Devi Sarva-Kritya-Kari Vibhoh'
'Tan-mayam Viddhi Samarthyam Sarvam Sarva-
padarthajam'
'Dharmasyarthasya Kamasya mukter bandha-trayasya ca'
'Yad yat Sva-karya - Samarthyam tat-tat-sandarshanam
Vapuh' XVI. 4&6.

The mantras are also regarded as the energy of Vishnu, as pure consciousness.

' Sakshad Vishnoh Kriya-saktih Suddha-samvinmayi Para'
XVI . 10

This Kriyasakti is also called *Samarthya* or *Yoga* or Parameshtya or Mahatejas or Maha-yoga. XVI. 32.

I. The first manifestation of this power like a long drawn sound of a bell is called NADA and it can only be perceived by the great yogis.

II. The next stage is like a bubble in the ocean and is called BINDU, which is the identity of a *name and the objective power denoted* by it.

III. The next stage is the evolution of this objective power (Namy-udaya) which is also called Sabda-Brahman.

Thus with the evolution of every alphabetic sound there is also the evolution of the objective power of which it is the counter-part.

Ahirbudhnya then goes on to explain the evolution of the different vowel and consonant sounds from the BINDU power.

By fourteen efforts there is said to have come the fourteen vowels emanating through the dancing of the SERPENT POWER - Kundalini Shakti of Vishnu.

' Nati va kundali - saktir adya Vishnor vijrhmhate' -
XVI.55.

By its two-fold subtle power, it behaves as the course of creation and destruction.-

This power rises in the original locus - Mula-dhara - when it comes to the stage of the navel, it is called Pasyanti and is then perceived by the yogins. - It then proceeds to the lotus of the heart - and then passes through the throat as the audible sound. The energy of the vowels sounds passes through the Sushumna Nadi.

In this way the different consonant sounds are regarded as the prototypes of the different manifestations of world energy and then again are regarded as symbols of different kinds of Gods or Superintendents of Energy.

' Vishnu-Saktimayā Varnā Vishnu-Samkalpa-jrmbhitāh'

' Adhishtitā yathā bhāvais tatha tan me niśā maya '
AS VII.3 .

An assemblage of some of these alphabets in different orders and groups called also the *Lotus* in the wheel (Cakra)

would stand for the assemblage of different types of complex powers.

Meditation on and worship of these *Cakras* are expected to bring objective powers typified by them under control. The different Gods are thus associated with the different *Cakra* and *Mantras*.

In fact the larger portion of Pancaratra literature is dedicated to the description of the rituals associated with these *Mantras* and *Cakras*, the building of corresponding images and temples for these subsidiary deities.

Meditation on these Mantras is also regarded as playing diverse protective functions -

Thus the main fulcrum of the Pancaratra philosophy seems to be this Sudarshana Shakti, the first and the foremost Vital Power of Brahman often identified with Lakshmi.

THE SIX GUNAS

THUS THE ULTIMATE reality is conceived as the eternal one, beginningless and endless, bereft of all names and forms beyond the reach of mind and beyond speech, far beyond time and space, absolutely changeless and omnipotent. It is of the nature of infinite bliss, pure intuition (Niḥsīma Sukhanubhava-lakshana). This Brahman is like the waveless sea, the calm and serene ocean. He is absolutely self-realised and complete in Himself. He has none of the worldly qualities which we find in creation or the órdinary things of mundane existence. He is absolutely bereft of all that is limited or bound, of all that is of the nature of evil. This Brahman cannot be defined by any language expressions such as 'THIS' or 'THAT' or such as 'SO' and 'SUCH'. The concepts of past, present and future have all vanished from Brahman. Brahman is beyond time and He does not exist in time. From this Eternal and Unchangeable Ultimate Reality there is said to arise a Samkalpa, a Desire, a Spontaneous idea. This Samkalpa is once again not limited by Time, Space or Substance. Because of this Samkalpa or WILL of Brahman there is the First manifestation from Him namely of Lakshmi. This appearance of Lakshmi from the Waveless Brahman (similar to the calm undisturbed sheets of water in an ocean) marks the First stage of manifestation called 'Suddha Srishti', pure creation that emanates from the calm serene Brahman which is all in a Unity with no diversity or disturbance or denomination.

With this emergence of Lakshmi from the waveless Brahman, there ensues the GUNAS also

'Prakrishtam Vijnānam balamatulamaisvaryamakhilam,'

'Vimaryadam Vīryam varada paramā Shaktirapica.'

' Param tejascheti pravaragunashatkam prathamajam,'

'Gunanam, nissimnām gananavigunānām prasavabhooh.'

The six gunas that emanate along with Lakshmi are Jnana, Shakti, Aisvarya, Bala, Virya and Tejas - as enumerated in the above quoted famous sloka of the Samhitas. Brahman is beyond all primary and secondary qualities and yet He is said to possess the six qualities. These six GUNAS are definitely and clearly not of nature, never as constituting or qualifying nature. They are not prakrita, empirical. These are Aprakrita, transcendental. It clearly means that even with the emanation of these Gunas, God still remains Nirguna in the sense of only being devoid of the usually stereotyped Gunas of Prakriti such as Sattva, Rajas and Tamas.

' Aprakritagunasparsham nirgunam parigiyate' -

Further the evolution or emanation of these Gunas does in no way affect the being or essence of God nor do they take anything away from Him. Before the emergence of Lakshmi all the six Gunas were lying dormant in Brahman, were avyakta, latent in Brahman when there was no movement of any kind in Brahman prior to His Samkalpa, Will to become -

' PURNA - Stimita - shadgunyam
Asamira - mvaro - pamam.' A.S. V-3.

All the six qualities of the Lord were in a state of calmness like the sky without a puff of air in it. This concourse of powers in a state of calmness is Lakshmi which exists as it were *like the very void.*

The emergence of these Gunas, the three pairs of Gunas, Brahman has started to 'become', to 'manifest'. Brahman has become active, creative and all further evolutions and emanations ultimately depend on the emergence of these three pairs of Gunas, Knowledge, Lordship and Power, each in a pair and six Gunas therefore in all.

'Yat tat Shadgunyamityuktam jnanaisvarya Baladikam,
'Yugaistasya tribhi suddha srishtih bhutch pravartate.'
A.S. V - 16.

Through the three pairs of these six Gunas, Pure Creation namely the first stage of Gods' becoming, Brahma's march is said to have begun -

'Tasyah samkalpamayyaiva sphuratyā sā bahu nartyate,
'Bhutch suddhimayī sphurtih sā vyūhavibhavātmikā,
AS.VI-6.

God Para-Vasudeva is therefore always titled as *'Shadgunya pāri purna'* with these six Gunas after their manifestation.

It is clearly admitted by and underlined in the Pancaratra samhitas that the essential nature of Brahman in His Primordial and innate condition is *pure consciousness.* It is indubitable according to the Pancaratras that the original Brahman is of the Essence of Consciousness. He can be even called a Nirguna - Brahman if by Guna we mean the Prakrita quality of Sattva, Rajas or Tamas. But He is not a Nirguna Brahman in the later Shankarite Advaitic sense as devoid of any Gunas. In fact Brahman even in His poise and repose has all the six Gunas ingrained and inhibited in Him. They are so to say hibernating in a latent form in Him in an unmanifest or Avyakta state. Otherwise they could not have emanated from Him along with Shakti or Lakshmi. Of course the five other qualities in this complex or consortium of six qualities are all however regarded as qualities of knowledge or consciousness itself which is considered the essence of God. Anyway whether in a completely manifest form or in an unmanifest form Brahman is never dissociated from the six Gunas which truly form the body of God. That is why Badarayana's Brahma Mimamsa is also called Sariraka Mimamsa. Brahma Mimamsa is also rightly designated as Nirnayaka shastra in the sense that Badarayana in his sutras gives a final judgment on the controversial issue of the Upanishads whether the Ultimate Reality is a Nirguna Brahman

or Saguna Brahman and whether Brahma vivarta vada or Brahma parinama vada is the correct theory in interpreting the relation of the Universe to Brahman and vice versa. The first Adhyaya of the Brahma Sutras is called Samanvaya adhyaya (Synthesis). The first pada has eleven adhikaranas (headings). The first four adhikaranas have each one Sutra. These four Sutras,

1. Athato Bramhajijnasa
2. Janmadyasya yatah
3. Sāstrayonitvat
4. Tantu Samanvayam.

The import of the above Sutras to put it in a nutshell is -

i. Then and therefore there is the desire to know Brahman,
ii. Brahman is the source of the creation , preservation and dissolution of the Universe,
iii. He is declared by Scriptures and is its source,
iv. He alone is the final person acclaimed in terms of the arbitration of the Scriptures.

Badarayana according to the views held by the Pancaratrins has given a final judgment to the controversy raised in the Upanishads that Brahman is out and out a Saguna Brahman only and that it is from out of these six qualities of Brahman ultimately that the entire universe of Souls and Matter is evolved as a manifestation. The existence of the Universe is taken as a reality and not as an appearance or a spurious imposition. The philosophy of the Pancaratras is the quintessence of the Brahma Mimamsa and thereby the decided opinion of the Srutis. That the entire Universe of matter and souls is the Sharira, the body of God is the stance taken both by Badarayana and the Pancaratras. That is why the Pancaratra philosophy is regarded as the main stay of the later Visishtadvaita Vedanta of Ramanujacharya and of Srivaishnavism.

I. JNANA :

It is consciousness, wisdom, knowledge with the connotation of Omniscience. This is the First and the Foremost of the six Gunas.

'Jnanam nama Gunam prahuh
Prathamam Guna - chintakah,
Svarupam Brahmanas tac ca
Gunas ca parigiyate.' A.S. III. 2-56-57

Jnana is regarded as both the essence and an attribute of Brahman. As Jnana is considered the quintessence of Brahman Himself the other five Gunas are sometimes referred to as attributes of this first attribute, Guna, Jnana itself. In other words Jnana is sometimes referred to as both a substance and an attribute also.

'Aśrayad anyato vritter
'Aśrayena sanvayat' -

Just as a flame is both a substance and an attribute as it sheds light and illumination so also is Jnana the original and the First attribute of God. This is the stand taken by Yamunacharya in his Agama Pramanya, a famous text on the Pancaratras.

The essence of Brahman is regarded as Pure Consciousness and yet He is regarded as possessing knowledge as a quality. Brahman is self-illuminating consciousness and an entirely spiritual principle. Brahman enters into all things and reflects them -

'Ajadam sva-tma-samobodhi nityam sarvāvagāhanam' -

Lakshmi Tantra refers to the guna Jnana as the essence of Lakshmi - II. 25 and says in II. 35 that the other five gunas are just - 'Jnanasya Sritayah' -Jnana itself canalised.

This Guna is defined as non-inert, self-conscious, eternal and all-pervading.

In Vishnu Purana (II, 12; 39-40; 43-45) it is stated as follows:

" Because the Holy one is essentially of the nature of intelligence, the form of all, but not material; therefore know that all particular things like rocks, oceans, hills and so on have proceeded from intelligence. But, when, on the cessation of all work everything is only pure intelligence in its own proper form without any imperfections; then no differences - the fruit of the tree of wishes - any longer exist between things. Therefore nothing whatsoever at any place or any time, exists apart from intelligence. Intelligence which is one only is viewed as manifold by those whose minds are distracted by the effects of their own works. Intelligence pure, free from stain, free from grief , free from all contact with desire and other affections, *everlastingly one* is the Highest Lord - VASUDEVA - apart from whom nothing exists. I have thus declared to you the lasting truths of things - that intelligence only is true and everything else untrue. And that also which is the cause of ordinary worldly existence has been declared to you" -

This Guna Jnana is 'ajada' in the sense it has 'Svayam - Prakashatva' - Self-illumination. It is ' Svatma-sambodhi' - It illumines itself not for its own sake but for the sake of the SOUL under whose shelter it persists - It is 'Nityam Sarvā -vagāhanam' - It is infinite intelligence because it is not restricted by limitations of Time as in the case of Knowledge of the souls that are bound. It is Brahman's essential attribute and as such it is Omniscient (Jnana in the ordinary finite souls can perceive all things only when they are emancipated. It is not so with the Brahman). The prefix AVA in 'Avagahanam' clearly indicates that their first attribute Jnana of Brahman can intuit and experience all things at all times - That is why it is described as 'Yo vetti yugapat-sarvam pratyakshena sadā svatah' - So this Jnana constitutes the essential innate nature of Brahman and also forms the attribute of God's personality. It is both a Dharma and a Dharmi. It is a Dharmabhuta to God's personality -

A precise definition of this first Guna namely JNANA is clearly given in the Ahirbudhnya Samhita in the following lines as said by Ahirbudhnya himself to Narada, the questioner:

'Ajadam svatmasambodhi nityam sarvavagahanam'

'Jnanam nama gunam prahuh prathamam guna-cintakah'

'Svarupam Brahmanasthacca gunasca parigiyate'.

II. AISVARYA :

This is usually designated as 'LORDSHIP'. As Lakshmi Tantra (IV.9) says it is absolute independence and freedom of the Lord, the ICCHA of God to create the Universe. Aisvarya is the Majesty of the Lord - His spontaneous agency (Kartritva) - His unfettered Freedom to create and form the Universe of Souls and matter (Jagat Kartritva). In other words it is the unlimited freedom of God to be the efficient cause, the Nimitta-Karana of the Universe -

'Kartritvam nama yattasya svatantrya-paribruhmitam'

'Aisvaryam nam tatproktam gunatattvartha - chintakaih'

III. SHAKTI :

This is usually given the appellation 'the Potency of the Lord' - His Aghatita-ghatana shakti, His unconditional capacity to accomplish the unaccomplished, to become the material cause of the Universe - Jagat Prakriti Bhava. It is God's immense talent to produce the Universe the cause of which no body can dare pry into.

'Jagat prakritibhavo yah sa shaktih parikirtita' -

It is the power of Brahman to be the material cause - (Upadana karanatva) of the Universe - that by which He has sponsored and promoted the world.

IV. BALA :

This is given the nomenclature the strength and stamina of God, His Dharana Samarthya - His power to sustain the Creative activity. Brahman is never exhausted, tired or fatigued in His

creative activity. Strength is usually defined as 'absence of fatigue' - 'Shramahani' - It is God's sustaining power. God is unfatigued in His Creative play, in His Recreation in Creativity.

'Shramahanistu ya tasya satatam kurvato jagat'

'BALAM nama gunastasya kathito gunacintakaiah'.

V. VIRYA :

It is God's inexhaustible fund of energy - that by which though being the material cause of the world, He yet remains unchanged in Himself, un-spent in Himself. It is the quality of unaffectedness in spite of activity and change - Vikara viraha. Though the material cause of the Universe, God is never spent out or exhausted by His creative activity. He has in Him the infinite ELAN VITAL. God is absolutely changeless in spite of His being the author of all changes and sponsor of change. It is also called the 'Achyutatva' or the 'Ajahatsva' of God, the Great. It is His Nirvikaratva dharma.

'Tasya upadanabhavepi Vikaraviraho kurvato jagat'

'Balam nama gunastasya kathito gunachintakaih'.

VI. TEJAS :

This is the Glory, the Splendour and the Might of God. The Mighty Lord is self-sufficient. He has within Himself 'Parabhibhavana-samarthya' - the unbounded greatness and glory of God that requires no foreign aid and that is always self-sufficient and contained within itself.

'Sahakaryanapeksha ya tatteja - samudahritam'

Tejas is simply God's self-sufficiency - that by which He creates the world by His own unaided efforts - Nairapekshya. God is in Himself Sahakari - Karanabhuta.

The above described SIX GUNAS are said to be the means the instruments of Pure Creation - Suddha Sarga. Laksmi Tantra says they form the basic material for the creation of the Universe. Lakshmi Tantra II 46-47, III 4, IV 24.

Of these six gunas, the first three enumerated namely Jnana, Aisvarya and Shakti are said to come under 'Visrama - Bhumayah' - stages of rest.

The last three gunas namely Bala, Virya and Tejas are said to come under ' Srama - Bhumayah' - stages of activity.

All these six gunas taken together are said to form the *Body of God,* the highest personal God.

' Shadgunya Vigraham Devam tadrisya ca sriya srutam'
' Samkalpasadhitaseshadchadaihika Vistaram'. A.S.VI.25.

These six gunas that constitute the body and frame of God, the Person (Shadgunya Paripurna), are also said to form the body of Lakshmi, God's consort.

In fact when the ultimate original One Brahman who is the essence of Knowledge and is endowed with all the six qualities (Shadgunya Paripurna) desires, resolves Himself to split into many He is called SUDARSHANA. This Sudarshana an aspect of Lakshmi or Lakshmi Herself is the support of all things in the world. In fact Ahirbudhnya says after a long penance Samkarshana taught him true knowledge and that true knowledge was none other than the Science or Knowledge of Sudarshana.

' Sudarshana svarupam tat prochyamanam maya srunu '
' Srute yatrakhiladhare samsayaste na santi vai '.
A.S. III. 2-5.

Otto Schrader says "knowing fully well that Sudarshana is the Instrument of Vishnu (the Brahman) we can safely conclude that *Vishnu, Kriya shakti and Bhutisakti* are respectively the Causa efficiens, Causa instrumentalis and Causa materialis of the world'.-

Any way Jnana, the first and the foremost quality is the primary quality out of which the other five qualities of Shakti, Aisvarya, Bala, Virya and Tejas are said to have evolved. The

essential quality of God is none other than Jnana. It is said so in Ahirbudhnya samhita.

'Yete shaktyadayah panca guna jnanasya kirtitah'

'Jnanameva param rupam Brahmanah Paramatmanah'.

To the question by Narada,

'Kim tat Shadgunyamityuktam devadeva jagatpate'

'Katham ca gunahinam tat shadgunyam parigiyate' -

How can that ultimate reality which is often described as Gunahina, Nirguna by some of the Upanishads be said to possess the six qualities, -

The answer is the description of the six gunas by Ahirbudhnya -

'Aprakrita gunasparsham nirgunam parigiyate'

'Shrunu Narada Shadgunyam kathyamanam mayanagha'.

It is called Nirguna because it is not associated with the empirical qualities as we already know of them. It is ever associated with the transcendental qualities - Aprakrita Gunasparsham - the Six Great Qualities.

When all the virtues and vices the accumulated sins over innumerable births are got destroyed when the vasanas the root-tendencies in man are shattered and completely obliterated, when the three empirical gunas and their products have no longer a sway on him, the individual soul, man can directly intuit this Brahman. The free souls inhibiting Paramapada, the Highest abode of Brahman are said to have visualised and experienced Him thus.

God as a person with the six qualities and as distinct from His SHAKTI is called VASUDEVA, the Supreme

'Sakteh saktimato bhedadvasudeva itiryate'

'Sarvashaktimayo devo Vasudevah sisrikshaya'

A.S. V.-29

GOD AS PARA - PARAVASUDEVA

THE ULTIMATE REALITY namely the Supreme Brahman is thus always a qualified Brahman. Shadgunya Paripurna, with the Six Great attributes. The very fact that He possess in Himself these six qualities means, He is a Brahman with a figure and a Form, DIVYA MANGALA VIGRAHA VISISHTA -

Visvaksena Samhita says, it is pronounced by God Himself that He has five PRAKARAS or modes of existence:

' Mama prakārāh panceti prahurvedantapāragah '

' Paro Vyuhasca Vibhavo niyantā sarvadehinam '.

' Archavatarasca tatha - - -

The First of His five prakaras or modes of existence, the Primary form, the most important figure in the Highest Heaven is God Himself in His PARA or Highest Form.

The other four prakaras or modes of existence are enumerated as VYUHA, VIBHAVA, ANTARYAMI and ARCA.

Vihagendra Samhita says that the PARA form of God is the root of His innumerable Avatara or descents -

'Murtinam Bijam Avyayam'-

It is said to be 'Sakshat Shakti' and Vihagendra Samhita says this Para form is especially meant for the enjoyment of the angels and the liberated souls.

This highest form of God, Para is identified with VASUDEVA and is usually titled as PARA VASUDEVA - Etymologically the root meaning of the term Vasudeva is -

' Sarvatra vasatiti VASUH Vāsuscā sau devasca - The entire Universe of Matter and Souls constitutes the Body of God

and God resides in them as imminent or Antaryami and shines for ever unsullied by their defects.

God, the Lord in the highest form is always said to be associated with His Power - (Shakti), Lakshmi or SRI.

'Shadgunya Vigraham Devam tadrishya cha Shriyāyutam'
'Samkalpasādhitāśesha dehadaihika vistaram'.

Ahir. B.S. VI. 25.

Different Samhitas mention varying number of consorts as companions of God in His PARA state. Some mention SRI or Lakshmi as the sole companion, some others SRI and BHUMI as the two invariable companions, some others SRI, BHUMI and NILA as the three constant companions and a few others even eight or twelve Shaktis as the consorts of God in His Para form.

The Ahirbudhnya samhita mentions of God the Para as associated with SRI only as already referred to above and this Samhita treats of SRI as a real philosophic principle

'Devyā Lakshmyā samasinam purnashādgunyadchayā'
'Nityoditairnityatriptairatikrantaistamo mahat'. ASIX. 31
'Yekā tvicchatmikā tasyā tathānyā tu kriyātmikā'
'Prathamā Paramā Lakshmīrjagattrantuh kutumbinī'

Lakshmi Tantra VII. 9-10.

Padma Tantra and Parameshvara Samhita and Uttara-narayana (a continuation of the Purusha sukta in the White Yajurveda) all refer to God as PARA with two consorts SRI and BHUMI. Parameshvara samhita actually refers to BHUMI as PUSHTI -

'Lakshmī pushtyoh svarupe ca nitye Bhagavati saha' -

God with SRI, BHUMI and NILA is very widely referred to in Parasara Samhita, Vihagendra samhita and also in later texts such as the Sita upanishad, Prakasa samhita, the tattvatraya and Yatindra mata dipika. It may be admitted so far as known that these three consorts are not referred to and admitted by the older known Samhitas.

Vihagendra Samhita says Sri, Bhumi and Nila can be identified respectively with Iccha, Kriya and Sakshat Bhakti of the DEVI - SRI representing good luck - Bhadra - BHUMI representing might - Prabhava - NILA representing the Sun, moon and fire.

It is further stated that SRI is threefold in her personality -

As Yoga shakti associated with Yoga practice,

As Bhoga shakti associated with Domestic worship,

As Vira shakti associated with Temple worship.

Similarly BHUMI is referred to as threefold. It is said to be of the nature of Pranava, is said to represent Buddhi and is also said to be the Sustaining power of the Earth with its supposed fourteen planes.

NILA is also admitted as threefold :

As Soma she is the goddess of vegetation,

As Sun she is the goddess of Time

As Fire she is associated with Heat and Cold, Hunger and Thirst, etc.

In one of the Samhitas the three Shaktis, Bhumi, Nila and Sri are considered just the three aspects of one and the same Shakti as in charge of the well being of the individual souls.

The three aspects are also associated with tinges of colour.

The white SRI is said to look after the good souls in whom Sattva guna predominates,

The red BHUMI is said to care for the Rajasic ones,

The black NILA is associated with the Tamasic ones as Durga -

Similar to the association with the Souls at the later stages, Vihagendra samhita mentions eight shaktis as associated with the Hero form Vira murthi of the Sudarshana, a subsequent emanation, a Vyuha form at a later stage :

The Eight Shaktis are :

KIRTHI	-	as representing	Renown,
SRI	-	"	Goodluck,
VIJAYA	-	"	Success or prowess,
SRADDHA	-	"	Faith,
SMRITHI	-	"	Memory,
MEDHA	-	"	Understanding,
DHRITI	-	"	Endurance,
KSHAMA	-	"	Forbearance and Forgiveness.

Padma Tantra and Vishnu Tilaka also make mention of these 8 Shaktis Sattvata samhita enumerates the following twelve Shaktis (energies)

LAKSHMI	representing	Will
PUSHTI	"	Prosperity
DAYA	"	Compassion
NIDRA	"	Sleep
KSHAMA	"	Forgiveness
KANTI	"	Beauty and Lustre
SARASVATI	"	Learning
DHRITI	"	Endurance
MAITRI	"	Benevolence
RATI	"	Venus
TUSHTI	"	Contentment or Satisfaction
MATI	"	Intellect.

'Lakshmih pushtir daya nidra kshama kantis-sarasvati'
'Dhritir maitri ratis-tushtir matir dvadasami smrita'

- Sattvata samhita IX. - 85.

The Sita Upanishad makes mention of the three deities Lakshmi, Bhumi and Nila as identified with -

Desire or Will	-	ICCHA
Action	-	KRIYA
Direct Manifesting power	-	Sakshat Shakti.

In the Upanishad Sita is regarded as the power which exists different from and also as one with the Supreme Lord constituting within Himself all the conscious and unconscious entities of the Universe - Sita is actually described as Maha-Lakshmi which is said to exist in three forms -

ICCHA
JNANA and
KRIYA -

Also certain peculiar interpretations of the Icchashakti, Kriya shakti and Sakshat shakti are to be found in the Sita Upanishad.

The various Shaktis (energies) in their different forms and different combinations in numbers are said to be associated with God in His various incarnations.

God is one and He assumes different forms in His different manifestations. God's energy which is none other than Shakti or His Samkalpa, Lakshmi, also assumes different forms in terms of His Lila Vibhuti, His active roles. Hence there are three or eight or even twelve energies of Shakti as represented in the different manifestations as female consorts. These will be discussed in greater detail when we come to the Vyuhas and Vibhavas of God the Almighty. For instance it may not be impertinent at this stage to state that in one of the Vibhava Avatars, in one of His incarnations, Patalasayana, God is said to be attended to by Shakti in the form of four consorts, Lakshmi, Chinta, Nidra and Pushti. Similarly in an other incarnation namely that of Ekarnava Saying He is said to be again companioned by four consorts in the persons and forms of Lakshmi, Nidra, Maitri and Vidya.

Lakshmi and her different manifestations are just tattvas, philosophical tenets or principles that are once again deeply ingrained in the very attributes of God Himself. For purposes of meditation and worship they are manifest in the form of different personalities as the female consorts of God.

Padma Tantra and Vishvaksena Samhita have both recorded the observation of seers, namely the liberated souls to the effect that the PARA form of God is four-armed and of dark-blue complexion. Padma Tantra says that the Para form of God has itself sprung from a still higher form of God

' Rupam adyam sanatanam ' -

' Vishnudehavayam mahah'.

Vihagendra samhita says that the PARA form of God is two handed only and all white and bright -

' MAHAH Paramabhasvaram ' -

Ahirbudhnya Samhita says that Ahirbudhnya saw God actually as being of the colour of a pure crystal and as clad in a yellow robe residing in Vaikuntha similar to the Sudarshana Purusha -

' Mantra tanur Bhagavan' .

Padma Tantra I. 3-16 says that the PARA form of God as seen by Brahman in meditation is the best of Purushas and the highest light.

All the Samhitas invariably point out that the PARA form of God has invariably itself originated from a higher form or perhaps the highest form - That ultimate form which has all forms and no forms - Brahman without beginning, middle or end. How the ultimate one and Only Reality namely Brahman is identified with the form and figure of PARAVASUDEVA, with Vishnu or Narayana will be dealt with shortly after discussing the weapons of God or His ornaments and also delineating the region of His abode, Vaikuntha.

The Divine figure, the 'Mangala Vigraha' of God is said to be adorned with NINE chief ornaments and weapons which once again are said to be mnemonic chiefly of the tattvas, the principles of the Universe. They are the following:

Kaustubha : This is a jewel worn on the breast of God. It represents SOULS.

Srivatsa:	- It is a curl of hairs on the breast. It is said to represent PRAKRITI.
A Club ;	- This represents 'Mahat'
A Conch :	- It symbolises Sattvic Ahamkara,
A Bow :	- It symbolises the Tamasic Ahamkara,
A Sword:	- It is the Replica of Knowledge,
A Sheath: (for the sword):	- It substitutes ignorance,
The Discus :	- It is symbol of the Mind,
The Arrows :	- They represent the senses,
A Garland :	- It represents the Elements.

Vishnu Purana in its Astrabhushana Adhyaya I. 22, gives a clear description as also the denotation of these ornaments and weapons of God. These are not merely regarded as symbols but also as actually connected with the Tattvas they represent (such as presiding deities etc.,). For instance, Vishnu Tilaka (II. 29-31) says that during the Universal Night, the soul ' in the form of the Kaustubha' rests in the splendour of Brahman from which it is again sent out into the world (prapanchita) at the beginning of the new Cosmic day in order to return once more and for ever or once for all when it is liberated.

Vaikuntha, Parama Vyoman is said to be the Highest heaven the residence of God as Para-Vasudeva.

' Jnānānandamayī styānā deshabhavam vrajatyuta '

' Sa desah paramam Vyoma nirmalam purushatparam ' .

' Vyoman' literally means ' Space- shere', Akasa, Nabha etc.,

Paramapada or Parama vyoman is said to be the product of Pure Creation, Suddha srishti and it is all composed of Suddha sattva matter or material. Matter in the ordinary sense of the term with the determinants of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas is a misnomer to be applied to the composition and constitution of Paramapada. The matter there at Paramapada is not even Suddhasattva of the prākritin type. It is a peculiar content that has absolutely no comparison in whatever we come across in Prakriti that is associated with Kala. It is of the nature of Jnana and Ananda. As Pancaratra texts describe it is Jnanananda Lokah - The ordinary concepts of Time and Space do not apply to this region just as nothing of Prakriti or what we know of in the ordinary sense of the term can apply to it -

' Kalam sa pacate tatra na kalas tatra vaiprabhuh' -

Even at this region of Paramapada there is at its own level the distinction between matter and souls . There is the supreme Soul God, His consorts, His attendants, the Nitya suris, and also the Released souls (Muktas). All these have their own bodies made of Aprakrita material. So also there are various objects and instruments or means of enjoyment and Bliss such as Sandal, flowers, jewels etc., places of enjoyment such as Palaces, pavilions, parks and lakes. It must be borne in mind that all these so called material substances are once again constituted of ' Pure Matter' that is spiritual in essence and composition, of the nature of knowledge and bliss essentially. They reveal and radiate as it were the crystallised splendour, 'styāna prabhā' of pure creation, Suddha Srishti.

This Parama vyoman is in fact considered to be the second Highest in the list of Tattvas. For instance Lakshmi Tantra states the Tattvas in a descending series in the following manner -

First the Lord, then the Highest Heaven (Paramapada) then the Purusha, Shakti, Niyati etc.,

Sri pancaratra also referred to as Brahmopanishad states:

' Svasattabhasakam sattvam gunasatvad vilakshanam ' -

Paramapada is the realm of Suddhasattva absolutely beyond all modifications of Prakriti and the ordinary empirical concepts that we know of and think in terms of . It is simply a realm made of self-luminous Suddha sattva where :

Everything is of the nature of Bliss,

' Ananda Lakshana Lokah '

Every enjoyment is of the nature of Ananda, ananda, mayā bhogāh,

Every body is made of the material of knowledge and Bliss only.

'Jnananandamaya dehāh '

In this blissful region of Paramapada, God PARAVASUDEVA called Para Tattva or Para Svarupa is said to reside. He is said to possess the most charming figure (Divyamangala Vigraha), is of four arms (Chaturbhuja), is accompanied by His consorts (Shaktis), Sri, Bhumi and Nila, is reclining on the bed and cushion provided by Adishesha, is ever adored and served by the Nitya Suris headed by Ananta, Garuda, Vishvaksena and others and is also ever attended to by the liberated souls who have atlast succeeded in entering His region and returning to Him, called the Muktas. He is in His full eternal glory and splendour, Nitya Vibhuti. He is in the fulness and perfection of His Six Gunas - Shadgunya Paripurna. This is the Blissful region every seeker of liberation aspires for. This is the vision and experience of God every seeker of Truth, Saint and Sage longs for.

It is clearly referred to in the Pancaratra samhitas that there are only two classes of Jivas namely the Nityas and the Muktas with God and His consorts in Paramapada, always in service (Kainkarya) on Him.

'Nityairmuktairnirabadhairnirmalānandalakshnaiah,

Sākshātpasyadbhirīsānam Nārāyanamanāmayam '.

Ahir. Sam. IX - 30.

Of these two classes of souls that inhabit the exalted region of God's residence, the Nitya Suris are *par excellence*, of surpassing merit and position, 'Nityas' means ' eternal ones', 'Suris' means masters, sages. They are of exalted status in their service to God for the simple reason they never got into the cycle of births and rebirths, they never had a fall from the region of God and never strayed away from His vicinity and never stayed away from His service. This is why they are said to hold permanent offices in the service of God as His adjutants so to say. Tattva Traya describes the Nitya Suris as those who never entered Samsara -

' Kadāpi samsāram aprāptah asprishta samsaragandhah'

While the Muktas are the ones liberated from Samsara (Nivritta samsarah), the Nitya suris never even entered it .

Scriptures refer to the Nityasuris in the following passage :

' Tad Vishnoh Paramam Padam sada Pasyanti Surayah '

The Svetasvatara upanishad also refers to them :

' Nityo Nityānām cetanas cetanānām,

' Eko bahūnām yo vidadhāti kāmān' -

Yatindra mata Dipika refers to the door-keepers and watchmen in the holy township of Vaikuntha called by names such as Canda, Pracanda, Bhadra, Subhadra etc. Sometimes they are referred to as Parshadas or Parishadas, the retinue of God with appellations such as Kumuda, Kumudaksha, Pundarika, Vamana, etc.

Padma Tantra does not include nityas like Kumuda and Ananta under Parishadas. Of course Yatindra mata dipika does not refer to the Nityas, Ananta, Garuda and Vishvaksena as door-keepers and watchmen. In fact these three are the most prominent among the Nitya suris with their prominent assignments:

Ananta or Shesha is the Serpent Couch of Vishnu,

Garuda is the Vahana, the vehicle of Vishnu,

Visvaksena is most often referred to as the 'Lord of Hosts', a sort of a personal secretary having an eye on behalf of God in all the Heavenly and Mundane affairs also.

In a way Visvaksena may be referred to as the Chargė d'affaires of God.

These Nityas are said to have the Carte blanche from God to incarnate in the world , just as Vishnu Himself does as and when necessary.

The liberated souls, the Muktas are described in the Visvaksena samhita as follows :

'Svarupam anumatram syat jnananandaikalakshanam'

'Trasarenu pramānas te rasmi - koti - vibhūshitāh '.

They are described as minute and atomic in size; they are said to be intensely radiating spiritual atoms of the size of Trasarenu (mote in a sunbeam). The same description is given in the Mahabharata also (XII. 346. 18.) where it is said that the liberated become atomic after having been burnt up by the Sun.

Ahirbudhnya samhita refers to the liberated souls as not possessing any body. While they (after liberation) do not possess any karma-made body, they are able to assume a non-natural body whenever they like as yogins are said to be capable of -

'Tatpadam prapya tattvajna mucyante vītakalmasah'

'Trasarenu pramānāste rasmikotivibhūshitāh, Ahir.S.V-27

(Even in Tattvatraya and Yatindram dipika the same ideas are expressed). The liberated souls can assume any type of a body or even several bodies and can wander anywhere in the Universe. Only they cannot interfere in the worldly affairs. Tattvatraya says that among the Muktas, the liberated souls all are equal essentially like grains of rice. There is no question of hierarchy in the status or being of the Muktas, the liberated souls. These liberated souls are intent on nothing but service, Kainkarya to God. Incidentally Ahirbudhnya samhita mentions

that whatever form (of God) the devotee has been associated with in his devotions and prayer in his mundane existence, that form itself he perceives as residing in the Highest Heaven.

' Bhaktāste yādrise rupe samsarapadamāśritāh'

'Tadriśām te samīkshante paramá vyoma vāsinah'

Of God's five modes of existence - Panca Prakaras, His Highest form, Para-Svarupa as discussed so far is said to be of two types namely Nityodita and Shantodita. Ahirbudhnya samhita categorically states that God as PARAVASUDEVA and as residing in Vaikuntha with Shri, Bhumi and Nila, with the Nityasuris and Muktas (liberated souls) is Nityodita Parasvarupa. This Nityodita as the very word indicates is for ever manifest and is never subject to periodic cycles of manifestation or evolution and dissolution -

'Purnam Nityoditam vyapi heyopadeyatojnitam' AS.II.25.

This Samhita refers to Shri also as -

' Uditanuditākāra nimeshonmesha rūpinī'

On the other hand, the Shantodita form of Parasvarupa or PARAVASUDEVA is said to arise at the time of emanations (Vyuha) from God the Supreme, Para Vasudeva. As the very word Shantodita (Shanta-Udita) indicates this type of Para is subject to periodical cycles of rising and setting (udita and shanta), evolution or emanation and dissolution and is also said to be the source of subsequent emanations such as Samkarshana. This Vasudeva is sometimes referred to as VYUHA-Vasudeva as juxtaposed with PARAVASUDEVA.

All the Samhitas are not uniform in expressing their opinion about the two types of the Ultimate, the Para Vasudeva form and the Vyuha Vasudeva form. God as Para is sometimes identified with Vyuha Vasudeva and sometimes distinguished from Vyuha Vasudeva. Padma Tantra describes the Para Vasudeva as dividing Himself into two as follows:

i. With one half of Himself he becomes Vyuha Vasudeva Crystal like,

ii. With the other half he is said to become Narayana Himself, black as a cloud, the Creator of the primeval waters. In a way Padma Tantra hints at saying that PARA form is not Nitya, eternal, but a periodical manifestation itself like the Vyuha Vasudeva. Vishvaksena Samhita on the other hand says - ' Nityoditat sambabhuva tatha Shantodito Harih' - From Nityodita arises subsequently the Shantodita form namely Vyuha Vasudeva. When Para Vasudeva is thus distinguished from Vyuha Vasudeva, Para Vasudeva is Nityodita - ever manifest (as experienced by the Nitya suris and the liberated souls -Nitya mukta anubhāvya). Vyuha Vasudeva is patently typed as Shantodita and also as the direct cause of the subsequent emanation Samkarshana - Samkarshana Vyuha - Karanabhuta.

The Vyuha Vasudeva is said to have sprung from Para Vasudeva in most of the Samhitas. Sometimes even Para Vasudeva is distinguished from the Ultimate Brahman. But in almost all the major samhitas Para Vasudeva is identified with NARAYANA.

By scanning the discussions in the various samhitas we can endorse the opinion of Vishnu Tilaka that PARAVASUDEVA is identical with NARAYANA, is eternal in the kingdom of Nitya Vibhuti invariably accompanied by Shri, Bhumi and Nila and ever worshipped by the Nityas and Muktas.

How Brahman, the one and the only Ultimate Reality is identified with PARAVASUDEVA and how PARAVASUDEVA is once again identified with NARAYANA or VISHNU is an interesting review.

BRAHMAN IS NARAYANA

IT IS CLEAR FROM the second Brahma Sutra of Vedavyasa - Janmadyasya yatah - that Brahman is the ultimate source from which the world proceeds, by which it is sustained and also destroyed. Creation, Maintenance and Destruction all the three qualities and roles are synchronised in one and the same person namely BRAHMAN - We should not for a moment misunderstand that the three portfolios are possessed by three different personalities as is commonly believed namely Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesvara, the Trimurtis. Nor should we attempt in any way to segregate the roles. That is why in a different Sutra - 'Atha caracaragrahanat', Isvara Svarupa, God's personality is established in the single role of destruction. All the three should be construed as the inseparable aspects of one and the same characteristic which is vested in one and only person, namely Brahman. Otherwise we will be positing three Ultimate Realities, the Trimurtis which contradict the accepted principle that the Ultimate Reality is one and only, without a second - '

'Ekameva advitiyam',

that there is nothing else equal to or surpassing Brahman -

Na tatsamascabhyadhikasca drisyate ' -

About the first cause or the ultimate source of this Universe there are so many passages in the Srutis such as the following :

' Sadeva Saumyedamagramāsīt '

' Asadvā idamagra āsīt '

' Taddhedam tarhyavyakritamāsīt '

' Brahmavā idamagra āsīt '

' Ātmā Vā idameka evagra āsīt '

' Sarvani hava imani bhutanyakasadeva samutpadyante

'Servâmi ha vā imami bhūtāni pranamevābhisamvisanti'

' Na sannacāsacchiva eva kevalah '

' Sambhurākāśa madhye dhyehah '

In all these passages referring to the Ultimate Causation, Sat, Asat, Avyakrita, Brahma, Atma, Akasa, Prana, Shiva, Shambu are variously mentioned. These are all common names referring to the fact of causation as such. They cannot at the same time refer to the causal factor as such, that which can be the cause. The various common names mentioned invariably point to one only namely the common causal factor as such and the causal factor which can cause the world is a proper name as represented in the person of NARAYANA - For instance the passage,

' Eko ha vai Narayana a sit ' -

This passage can refer to the *Karanavastu* as such and it is acclaimed as Narayana. For instance in one of the Vidhi Vakyas in the Brahmanas it is mentioned - ' Paśunā Yajeta ' - Pasu here is a common name and the mantravarna clarifies it by saying -

' Chagasya Vapāyā medhaso anubruhi ' -

In the same way the nine terms as referred to in the nine passages quoted all point to one person, NARAYANA who has in Himself the attributes of NIKHILAJAGATKARNATVA (being the cause of the entire Universe) and Niratisaya brihatva (the astounding capacity to grow-Brahmatva).

In the Taittiriyopanishad it is stated:

' Yatova imani bhutani jayante '

' Yena jatani jivanti '

' Yatprayamtyabhisam Visanti '

' Tadvijijnasasva Tadbrahmeti '

He is the Brahman and He is to be worshipped by whom this entire Universe of living and non-living beings is originated, by whom they live and have their being and in whom they finally merge (and get destroyed) -

This idea is further underlined in the Mahopanishad,

'Ekohavai Narayana asinna Brahmannesanah' -

That Para Brahma is *one*. He is the Para tattva not the ordinary Brahma or Rudra.

' Karanam tu dhyeyah ' - says the Brahmasutra again. Brahman is the sole cause of this Universe and He is therefore to be meditated upon and worshipped.

" Isavasyamidam sarvam yatkinca jagatyām jagat " - says the Isavasyopanishad. The entire Universe is imbued with God; He is the Creator and the Ruler; He is inherent and imminent in everything of the Universe and conducts its affairs " -

" Purushaevedagam Sarvam " - says the Purushasukta - Brahman is entaitled in everything and is therefore to be known as Purusha.

" Hriscate Lakshmiscapatnyau " - reiterates Purushasukta. The Para Brahma is the Lord of Lakshmi and hence Sriman - Narayana.

The passage in the Chandogya Upanishad - VI. 2. 1,

'Sadeva saumyedamagramasit' - cannot mean that to begin with there was one only undifferentiated homogeneous substance namely -Intelligence free from all differences. This is an impossibility - Though the primary and essential nature of Brahman is Intelligence, Consciousness, it is a person with intelligence. It cannot be Pure Intelligence. Out of context the quotation can be misused in any manner one likes. But in the context in which it occurs in the Chandogya upanishad, it is evident that the words are framed to point out that by the one knowledge of Brahman, by the knowledge of One thing all things are known - That one thing, the Highest Brahman 'SADEVA' of SAT is both the material and the efficient cause of the Universe (Jagat Utpadanatvam and Jagat Nimittatvam). That Brahman is Omniscient, (Sarvajnata), Omnipotent (Sarvashakti-yogah), and can will everything (Sarvasamkalpatvam). He is the imminent

principle (Sarvantaratvam) and also the foundation (Sarvadharatvam). He is also the governing principle of everything (Sarvaniyamanam). This Brahman, the nucleus of many excellences or super-qualities (Kalyana guna gana) is said to constitute the SELF of the entire Universe and as such the self of Svetaketu also. It is in that context the epilogue is pronounced ' TAT TVAM ASI SVETAKETU'.

In the same manner, there is the passage in the Mundaka upanishad (I. 1.5).-

' Atha Parā yayā tadaksharam ' - The higher knowledge, Parā knowledge is that by which the indestructible (tadaksharam) namely Brahman is known, First of all evil qualities associated with Prakriti are denied of Brahman and then it is pointed out that Brahman has the qualities of Eternity (Nityatva), all-pervasiveness (Vibhutvam) subtility (Sukshmatvam), omni-presence, omni science, all creativeness (Bhutayonitvam) and other auspicious qualities.

' Satyaṁ Jnanam Anantam Brahmeti ' -

Here again all the four words are of dvitiya vibhakti and ekavacananta. They indicate that Brahman is beyond 'desa-pariccheda' 'kala-pariccheda' and 'vastu-pariccheda'. Here Brahma is permanent neuter gender and is the substantive noun qualified by ' Ananta' which is of masculine gender, ' Satya and Jnana' are also of masculine gender and they are again substantive to ' Ananta' - (Though ' Jnana' is generally accredited to be of neuter gender, here it is of masculine gender with the annotation - Jnanam asya astiti jnanah -)

The term ' Satya' indicates Nirupadhika satta in Brahman always. That means though Brahman as the material cause of the universe undergoes many changes, in Himself and by Himself, at home, He is NIRVIKARA - not subject to any modifications.

The term ' Jnana' invariably points to that person who possess Jnana always in an unlimited way. So even the liberated souls who had once knowledge limited (though absolutely

restoted later) cannot be on a par with Brahman-who always has unlimited knowledge. So this term points to Brahman who has unlimited knowledge from eternity to eternity.

The term ' Ananta' indicates that which is bereft of the threefold limitations, Trividhaparicchedas-Although the Nityas are of course different from the Baddhas and Muktas in the sense that they never entered Samsara (cycle of births and deaths) and never got their knowlege limited, yet they cannot be considered on a par with Brahman for the simple reason that their very being and personalities are due to the will of God, His Samkalpa. Therefore even the Nityas cannot have the capacity to create and grow as Brahman can wish to. They do not possess the two great features of Brahman namely His Nirupadhika Jagat Karanatva and Brahmatva - God is obviously different from all His Creations and from all that He has Himself become. Thereby God is Ananta and therefore He is Brahma.

Though the single term ' Ananta' encompasses within its fold all the auspicious qualities of God, Sathya and Jnana add meaningful lustre to it. Hence all the three, Sathyam, Jnana and Ananta are auspicious qualities that God possesses. These three terms are in a coordination (Samanadhikaranya) and they denote one thing as distinguished by several attributes. They cannot prove a substance devoid of attributes, a Nirvishesha vastu. Samanadhikaranya literally means ; aneka-visheshana vishishtaikartha abhidanat vyutpattya - the abiding of several things in a common substrate -

In the same manner passages like,

' Nityam Vijnanam Anandam Brahma ' -

' Avikaraya Suddhaya Nityaya Paramatmane ' -

definitely indicate the One and Only Brahman - as a substratum of several attributes as mentioned in the passages.

It is clearly pointed out in the texts that wherever it is declared that knowledge is the essential nature of Brahman, it invariably

does not mean that mere knowledge constitutes the fundamental reality (Na tavata nirvisheshajnanamatrameva tattvam)-

Rather it definitely means that knowledge constitutes the essential nature of a knowing subject only (Jnatureva jnanasvarupatvat) which is the substrate of knowledge just as the Sun, lamps and gems are the substrate of light (Sribhashya) - Therefore it is indubitable that Brahman as Jnana invariably means *Jnatritva*, the knowing capacity of a knower and never mere knowledge. All the Srutis substantiate this no doubt :

'Yassar vajnassarvavit' - He who is all knowing and omniscient (Mundako. up. I. 1. 9)

'Tadaikshata' - It thought (Chandogya up.VI.2.3)

'Seyam Devataikshata' - This divine person thought ("3.)

'Sa ikshata Lokannu srija iti ' He thought let me beget these worlds - (Aitareya Aran. II 4 , 1. 2.)

'Nityo nityanam cetanah cetananam eko bahunam - Yo vidadhati kaman ' He who grants the wishes - as eternal of eternals, as knower of the knowers, as one of the many (Chandogya up. II.5)

'Jnajnau dvavajāvisanīsau ' - There are the two unborn ones, one who knows, and one who does not know, the one all-powerful and the other powerless, (Svetasva. up. I. 9)

'Tamisvaranam Paramam Mahesvaram,
Tam Devatanam Paramam ca Daivatam
Patim Patinam Paramam Parastat,
Vidama Devam Bhuvanesamidhyam ' -

Let us know Him the Isvara, the supreme Lord of Lords, the highest deity of deities, the master of masters, the transcendent, let us know Him the Lord of the Universe and the adorable one - (Sveta. up.VI.7)

' Na tasya karyam karanam ca vidyate ,
Na tatsamasca abhyadhikasca drisyate '

'Parasya saktirvividhaiva sruyate,

Svābhāvikī Jnānabalākriyā ca' -

Of Him there is no known karyam (effect) or karanam (instrument) - (No known body or organ) - No one is seen like unto Him or better, His high power is revealed to be manifold indeed, constituting His essential nature as Knowledge, Strength and Action. (Sveta. up. VI. 8)

'Esha ātmāpahata - pāmpā vijaro vimrityur viśoko - Vijighatso pipasah, satyakamah satyasamkalpah' -

This is the self free from sin, ageless, deathless, griefless, free from hunger, free from thirst, whose desire is true, whose thought of purpose (satya samkalpa) is true - (Svet. up. VIII. 1-5)

All these upanishadic texts clearly and variously point out that while the essential nature of BRAHMAN is knowledge, there belong to him many other excellences or excellent qualities. Brahman being the possesser of excellent attributes in Himself is primarily a knowing subject. -

'Jnātritva pramukhān kalyāna gunān jnanasvarups - yaiva Brahmanah svābhāvikān' - (Sri Bhashya)

Brahman therefore cannot be bare undifferentiated consciousness. It is essentially a knowing *person* with other excellent qualities.

Brahman can never be thought of even for a moment as Nirguna, devoid and devaluated of qualities. Of course there are innumerable references in Srutis to Brahman as Nirguna in terms of 'Nirgunam', 'Niranjanam', 'Nishkalam, nishkriyam, shantam' etc. These never mean in their import the connotation of not possessing any qualities. On the other hand they categorically mean that Brahman is devoid of qualities born of prakriti (or associated with prakriti and therefore inferior qualities)

"Svabhaviki Jnanabalakriya ca

Satyakamah Satyasamkalpah" -

These clearly indicate that there is absolutely no scope at all even to think of Brahman as Nirguna. The Nirguna texts simply convey to us that Brahman is devoid of the inferior qualities born of and based upon prakriti, nature. They can never outright deny qualities of Brahman. Of course the Saguna texts declare that to Brahman whose essential nature is knowledge there belong many excellent qualities among which that Brahman is a knowing subject stands first and foremost. The Saguna texts declare that Brahman is 'Kalyanagunagana bhūshita' while the nirguna texts declare that Brahman is 'Heyagunarahita', bereft of emperical and inferior qualities.

Under such circumstances there cannot be any yawning gulf between the Saguna and Nirguna texts. No gulf exists and no gulf need be bridged. The Nirguna texts deny Brahman of inferior qualities just to support and sustain the unsullied excellences acclaimed by the Saguna texts. They act as boosters to the Saguna texts. They are the undertones to promote fervently the major tones of the Saguna texts. They in short help to increase the reputation of the values held by Brahman. That Brahman is 'Advitiya' simply means not that nothing else exists, but that there is nothing else equal to Brahman or surpassing Brahman. That Brahman is 'Nirvikara' means that the modifications and changes affecting the Universe of matter and souls do not affect Brahman as such, although the entire Universe of living and non-living beings is none other than a modification of Brahman Himself, His body, His sarira, His modal transformation. 'Nirvikara' means these vikaras do not affect Brahman, just as the vikaras or changes of the body like boyhood, adolescence, youth and oldage do not affect in any way the soul - God, the PARA has a non-natural Divine Super Figure *par excellence* - Aprakrita divya mangala vigraha - quite different from the empirical inferior bodies we possess.

'Yadbrahmano gunavikara sarirajanma,
Karmadigocaravidhipratishedha vācah '.

'Anyonyabhinna vishayā na virodhagandham,

Arhanti tanna vidhayah pratishedabādhyāh'.

So we have to conclude that the subject matter of the Nirguna vakyas is just the inferior qualities (Heyagunas) just as the subject matter of the Saguna vakyas is the great qualities of the Lord - The Lord, God is the embodiment of all the highest values, the best attributes always, and bereft of all the inferior qualities associated with prakriti. With these duets so to say of 'Heyagunapratibhatatva' (Nirguna vakyas) and 'Kalyana-gunakaratva' (Saguna vakyas), the Srutis sing the glory of God in the music of 'Ubhayalingatva', the affirmative and the negative.

So the phrase 'Advitiya' that Brahman is without a second simply points to the fact that the one and the only cause of the manifest Universe is Brahman Himself as there does exist nothing other than Brahman, that Brahman Himself possesses manifold powers and when about to Create Himself constitutes the substantive cause of the world as also its efficient cause by willing to create. There are innumerable references in the Srutis supporting this point of view :

'Tat kurut ātmanvīsyām' - (Bri. - Brahmana).

That Brahman willed to have the Universe (of animate and inanimate beings) as its body.

(Brahman with the unmanifest matter and souls in Himself desired to evolve into the manifest universe of matter and individual souls).

'Prajākāmo vai Prajāpatih' - (Prasna - I.4)

PRAJAPATI (the lord of creation) namely Brahman, verily was desirous of offspring -

'Sokamayata bahusyam prajayeyeti' - (Taittireya - Anandavalli). He (the supreme soul) desired. Let me become many, let me be born.

'Sa aikshata lokan nu srija iti' - (Aitareya up. I. 1.1) He thought, 'let me now create the worlds' - The above references point to the fact that Brahman first of all desired to create.

Having willed to create, He then created.

'Asad va idam agra asit, tato vai sad ajayata'

(Tai. Anandavalli) Unmanifest verily was this (the universe of matter and souls) in the beginning. Therefrom verily was the manifest universe (Nama-rupa prapanca, the world of name and form, matter and souls forming the body of God) produced.

' Idam sarvam asrijata , yad idam kim ca ' (Tai - Ananda) 'He created all this, whatever is here ' -

'Sa imāml lokan asrijata' - (Aitareya up. - I. 1. 2)

The Para Brahman created these worlds -

In the first Rik of the Narayanopanishad the same idea of Lord Narayana's will to create is expressed in the following words :

HARIH OM.

Atha Purusho ha vai Narayano akamayata Prajassrijayeti-

Thus it is now very clear that the ultimate cause is the one and the only being in the last resort and this Being is not a mere consciousness, but a person with consciousness as His esential nature and with many other superlative attributes. Otherwise He cannot desire, He cannot Will to create and He cannot create. Even the Nirvisheshatva Srutis such as 'Sattamatram nirvishesham niriham' establish 'Savisheshatva' only with reference to Brahman, as is clearly exposed so far. Brahman is therefore essentially a Purusha, a Person with a body, mind and will of His own. The various terms such as Para Brahma, Para Tattva, Param Jyoti, Paramatma, Purusha all refer to the one and the only ultimate reality namely NARAYANA.

Here a famous quotation may be cited :

' Kastvam tattvavidasmivastum paramam kim tarhi Vishnuh katham '

' Tattvedamparataittirīyakamukhatrayyamtasandarsanat '.

' Anyāstarhi girah katham gunavasadatraha Rudrah Katham'

' Taddrushtya kathamudbhavati avatarati anyatkatham niyatām'.

Obviously these two stanzas are in the form of questions and answers :

Q. - Kastvam ? Who are you ?

A. - Tattvavidasmi - I am the one who has understood the truth.

Q. - Vastu paramam kim tarhi ? - Then what is the highest truth ?

A. - Vishnu - Vishnu is the highest truth.

Q. - Katham ? -How ? (How can we say Narayana (Vishnu) is the highest Tattva ?)

A. - Tattvedam Parataittiriyakamukhatrayyanta sandarshanat ?

In Narayananuvak which is primarily intended to establish the Ultimate Truth, in Purushasukta and many other allied dissertations we are reminded of Narayana as the Ultimate, one and only reality -

' Sahasrasīrsham Devam Visvaksham Visvasambhuvam'

' Visvam Narayanam Devamaksharam Paramam Prabhum'.

The import being Narayana is the indestructible ultimate LORD.

Q. - Anyastarhi girah katham ? - What about the other various references to other beings as ultimate realities?

A. - Gunavaśāt - All the other references are pointers ultimately to Narayana Himself,

Q. - Atraha Rudrah katham ? - What about mention in dispatches from Rudra such as ' I am the Ultimate ' ? (For

instance in Atharva Siras it is claimed by Rudra ' Ahamekah prathamamasam vartami ca bhavishyami ca) -

A. - Taddrishtyā - Rudra has announced so having an eye on Narayan Himself as His inner self -

Q. - Kathamudbhavati ? - How is He said to arise then ? (If Vishnu is the Paratattva, He should be unborn - ajayamano - But there are references in the scriptures such as 'Brahmavishnu - rudrendaste sarve samprasuyante' - contrary to the concept of a Paratattva.

A. - Avatarati - He descends - (he descends and incarnates not in terms of any karma to be gone through, not to undertake sufferings and enjoyments, but by His own will to sustain the Universe which He has Himself produced).

Q. - Anyatkatham ? - How then references to others (as Brahman) ? (There are references to Shiva, Mahesvara etc. as the Ultimate Brahman in Srutis such as the Svetasvataropanishad etc. How then ?

A. - Nīyatām - Better conduct the arguments towards the Ultimate as Narayana (having an eye on Purushasukta and such other texts)

These two stanzas aim at pointing out :

i. The so-called Trimurtis, Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesvara cannot be three ultimate Lords with equal status though with different portfolios.

ii. Even the contention that the Trimurtis are one and the same person in different successive incarnations cannot hold good.

iii. That there is another Supreme person or principle apart from and above the Trimurtis is also not tenable.

iv. That Vishnu is the only Paratattva and Narayana is Paravasudeva is the only proposition set down or advanced for argument.

Often we meet with different passages in the scriptures such as

' Agnissarva devatah '

' Apo va idam sarvam '

' Brahmano vai sarva devatah '

' Na Kirindra tvaduttarah' -

These passages extol particular deities or persons under specific circumstances. Apart from their circumstantial importance they do not possess any other Ultra-greatness.

Similarly in passages like,

' Hiranyagarbhassamavartatagre bhutasya jatah patireka asit' -

' Karanam tu dhyeyah ' -

'Sarvaiśvaryasampannassarveśvarassambhurakaśamadhye - dheyah ' -

In all these references to Hiranyagarbha, Rudra implicitly mean Narayana Himself as the inner imminent principle.

The Narayanopanishad in its Rigveda siras underlines the fact that Narayana Himself is responsible for Srishti, Sthiti and Laya, creation, sustenance and destruction.

'Narayanad Brahma jayate, Narayanad Rudro jayate, Narayanad Indro jayate, Narayanatprajapatayah prajayante, Narayanad dvadasaditya Rudra vasavassarvani ca chandagamsi, Narayanadeva samutpadyante, Narayane praliyante, Narayane pravartante'

The entire Universe is born of NARAYANA (Narayanadeva - samutpadyante) - The entire Universe is dissolved in Narayana - (Narayane praliyante) - The entire Universe is sustained by Narayana - (Narayane pravartante).

'Narayanatprano jayate, Manassarvendriyani ca, Khamvayurjyotirapah prithivī visvasya dhārinī' (Narayanopanishad)

Mundaka upanishad also strikes the same note (I. 2, 3) -

' Yetasmajjayate pranomanah sarvendriyānica '

' Khamvayurjyotirapah prithivi visvasya dhārinī '

' Ātmana esho prāno jāyate ' - (Prasna. up. 3.3)

From Paramatman is born prana.

'Tasmadva etasmadātmana ākaśas sambhūtah '

' Ākāś adväyuh , Vayoragnih, Agnerāpah, Adbhyah Prithivī ' (Taittiriya. 2. 1.)

Everything is born of Narayana, everything living and non-living including the Vedas also (Sarvani Chandamsi)

' Ricassāmāni jajnire '

' Chandagamsi jajnire tasmāt'

'Yajustasmādajāyata' - (Purushasukta).

Rigveda, Samaveda, Chandas, Yajurveda are all born of Him

'Vägvivritāsca Vedah ' - (Mund. up. 2 . 1 . 4)

God's voice published the Vedas -

' Tasmadricah samayajūmshi ' (Mund. up. 2 . 1. 6)

It was from Para Brahma that Rik, Sama and Yajur vedas were born.

' Sa ishata ime nu lokā, loka-pālān nu srijā iti ' (Aita. I.1. 3) He thought, 'Here then are the worlds. Let me now create the guardians of the worlds ' -

'Tasmac ca devā bahudhā samprasūtah sādhyā manushyā ' - (Mund. up. II. 1 . 7)

From Him also the Gods are born in manifold ways, the celestials, men etc.,

'Brahmā devānām prathamah sambabhūva' - (Mund up. I.1.1) The first among the Gods to be born was Brahma.

'Yo Brahmānam Vidadhātipurvam, Yo vaivedamsca prahinoti tasmai ' (Sveta : VI. 18).

Paramatman first created Brahma and delivered to him verily the Vedas.

' Yah Purvam tapasojatam adbhyah purvam ajayata' - (Katha. up. II.1.5) He created Brahman from austerity, from the waters.

' Esha sarvesvarah, esha sarvajnah, Eshontaryami, Esha-yonih sarvasya prabhavāpyayau hi bhūtānām ' - (Mandukya. up. 6)

He is the Lord of all, He is the knower of all - He is the inner controller; He is the source of all - He is also the beginning and the end of all beings -

'Sarvam khalu idam Brahma tajjalān' - (Chandogya up. III. 14.1.)

The entire Universe is born, borne and buried in Brahman Himself.

' Ya thorna-nabhih srijate grihnate ca,
Yatha prithivyam oshadhayah sambhavanti ,
Yatha satah purushat kesalomani,
Tathaksharat sambhavatīha visvam' - (Mund. up.*I. 1-7)

Just as a spider sends forth and draws back its own thread born of itself, just as the herbs grow on the earth, just as hairs grow on the head and body of a person from out of Himself, so also from the imperishable Brahman the entire Universe is created.

Brahman is the only cause and the Universe is His body as real as Brahman Himself its source -

'Yah Sarvajnah Sarvavid yasya Jnanamayam tapah;
Tasmad etad Brahma nama-rupam annam ca jayate' -

(Mund. up. I.1.9) This universe of name and form is evolved out of Brahman who is all-knowing and all-wise, and whose austerity consists of knowledge.

' Asman mayi srijate visvam etat' - (Svetasva.IV.9) The Lord who can do wonders has created this Universe .

`'Jnah Sarvajno bhuvanasya asya gopta ' - (Svc. VI.17) God the all-knowing and the all-pervading is the protector of this Universe.

'Prajapatih praja asrijata ' - (Yajur)

God the Lord created the human beings.

'Tamah Parc deve eki bhavati' - (Subala.up)

At the time of dissolution the entire Universe becomes one with the Supreme Brahman.

The same Narayanopanishad in its Yajurveda siras states :

' Om atha Nityo Narayanah,
Brahma Narayanah,
Sivasca Narayanah,
Sakrasca Narayanah,
Dyavaprithivyauća Narayanah,
Kalasca Narayanah,
Disasca Narayanah,
Urdhvasca Narayanah,
Adhasca Narayanah,
Antarbahisca Narayanah,
Narayana evedagam sarvam,
Yadbhut am yaccabhavyam,
Nishaklo niranjano nirvikalpo
Nirakhyata suddho deva eko Narayanah,
Na dvitiyo asti kascit,
Ya Yevam Veda-

Sa Vishnureva Bhavati; Sa Vishnureva Bhavati. That Narayana is Nitya,without beginning or end and that He has this entire Universe as His body for all times, the so-called past, present or future either in a subtle form (Unmanifest condition) or in a gross form (manifest condition) - Tatsarvam Vyapya Narayana sthitah - He has pervaded the entire Universe - Sarvam Vishnu Mayam Jagat - The entire Universe is through and through

permeated by Vishnu (Vishnu as the imminent principle, as Antaryami will be discussed later). The obvious contention at this stage is to establish that the One and the Only Ultimate Brahman is Vishnu and this entire Universe of souls and matter are not unreal, but as real as Vishnu Himself as they are created by Vishnu and as they form the body or Sarira of NARAYANA .

In the Narayana Valli of Taittiriyopanishad it is significantly pointed out -

'Narayana Parambrahma, Tattvam Narayanah parah '

'Narayana Parojyotih, atma Narayanah parah ' -

Narayana Himself is Para Brahma, Narayana is the Paratattva; Narayana is Paramjyoti and Narayana is Himself Paramatma. - Brihati, Brahmayati tasmat ucyate Para Brahma

'Naiveha kimcana agra asid amulam anadharam imah prajah Prajayante, divyo deva eko Narayanah ' - (Subala.up)

There existed nothing before creation; all these are brought about by the one Narayana who is in Parama Pada. Apart from Him (Narayana) there is no other source or support for them -

'Eko ha vai Narayana asit na Brahman, nesanah' - (Mahopanishad) - Verily there was the One Narayana - neither Brahma nor Siva (obviously meaning that Brahman and Siva were later created by Narayana) -

'Sarvada Sarvakrit Sarvah paramatmeti udahritah ' - (Subala) - Narayana is everything and always engaged in doing every thing.

'Divyo hi amûrtah purushah sa bāhhyābhyantaro hy ajah' Lord Narayana called Purusha, who does not possess a body of the Prakritic type even in Paramapada, has pervaded the entire Universe both within and without. (Mundaka.up.II. 1.2)

Narayana Paro jyotih ' - (Tait. up)

Narayana is the Supreme light.

'Atha ya esha samprasadosmat sarīrāt samuthāya param - jyotir upasampadya svena rupena abhinishpadyate' - (Chand.up. VIII.3.4)

'Hiranmaye pare kose virajam Brahma nishkalam,

Taç cubhram jyotisham jyotih tad yad atma-vido viduh'. (Mund. up. 2.2.10)

'Atha yad athah paro divyo jyotir dipyate' - (Chand. up. 3.13.7)

'Na tatra suryo bhati, na candratarakam, nema vidyuto bhanti, kutoyam agnih' -

' Tam eva bhāntam anubhāti sarvam tasya bhāsā sarvam idam Vibhati ' - (Katha up. 2.2.15)

All these sruti vakyas point to the Divya jyoti , the Tejas of God.

' Utāmritatvasyeśānah' - (Purushasukta)

Narayana is the bestower of salvation.

'Yamevaisha vrinute tena labhyah' - (Katha. up. 1.2.23)

He is to be attained only by him whom He chooses.

'Tam evaikam janatha ātmānam,

Anyā vaco vimuncatha,

Amritasyaisha sethuh ' - (Mund. up. II. 2.5.)

That Brahman without a second is Himself Narayana . Give up the other ideas. That Narayana Himself is your bridge for crossing over to salvation.

Paramatma, Narayan is Nitya - beyond Time. He is 'Kāla-Kālah' 'He is Kalaniyamaka - the ruler of Time says Svetasvatara upanishad. The Kathopanishad also emphasises the same point 'Iśānam bhuta bhavyasya'. The Taittiriya Nara yana says 'Sarve nimesha jajnire vidyutah purushadadhi' - It is by Narayana Time with its computers of minutes were produced. 'Purusha evedagam

Sarvam, Yadbhutam yaccabhavyam' - Narayana has as his body all the things of the past, the future and the present.

Hence the emphatic assertion in Katha. up. (I.3.11)

' Purushan na param kincit :

Sa Kāshthā, sa parā gatih ' -

There is nothing beyond or superior to Narayana. He is the terminus; He is the final goal.

' Na tatsamasca apyadhikasca drisyate' (Svet. up. VI.8)

There is not seen His equal or His better.

'Yasmāt param nāparam asti kincit,

Yasmat naṇīyo na jyāyosti kascit '.

There is nothing superior to Narayana; there is nothing subtler than Him; nothing greater than Him. (Mund.up. I. 1.6)

' Isana sarvavidyanam Isvara sarvabhutanam,

Brahmadhipatih Brahmanodhipatih.

Brahma sivo me astu sada sivôm' - (Taittiriya)

The Lord of all learning, the ruler of all living beings, the master of the Vedas , the inner ruler of Caturmukha Brahma, the auspicious at all times, the gist of AUM, namely NARAYANA - let Him do us good.

'Anor aniyan mahato mahiyan,

Atmasya jantor nihito guhāyām,

Tam akratuh pasyati vīta-śoko,

Dhātu - prasādān mahi mānam ātmanah' -(Katha.up.I.2.20)

Subtler than the subtle, greater than the great, NARAYANA, the Self is set in the heart of every creature. He is in the innermost recess of every one. When one realises this God he will be freed from all sorrow and enjoys His Bliss.

' Tenedam purnam purushena sarvam'

This entire Universe is pervaded by Him and full with Him.

'Vedāham etam Purusham Mahāntam ,

Aditya - Varnam Tamasah parastāt,

Tameva Viditvā atimrityum eti

Nanyah panthā Vidyateyanāya' -

I know Narayana the Supreme person residing in Vaikuntha far above Tamas and Nature, the Lord of Sun-like brilliance and utmost Tejas. Only by knowing Him does one pass over mortality. There is no other way.

Often the question is raised, can the Supreme person, the Brahman be known ? If Brahman cannot be known all the metaphysical and religious pursuits will be of no avail. Then why should the Brahma sutras begin with the aphorism and laconic assertion - Athato Brahmajijnasa - Why there be these statements made in the Srutis ? -

' Brahmaveda Brahmaiva bhavati' -

' Brahmavidapnoti Param' -

'Atma vā are drashtataryah' - and so on ?

Brahman can be known, can be understood and can be meditated upon. It is only by knowing Him we begin to love Him.

There are statements in the Taittiriya and elsewhere -

'Yato vaco nivartante aprapya manasā saha' -

'From whence all speech together with the mind recoils, unable to reach it.'-

This assertion is just to point out indirectly and of course with emphasis the infinite nature of Brahman's suspicious qualities - If this were not the real import of the passage, how can we then explain the significance of passages in the same Taittiriya text such as,

'Aum, Brahmavid apnoti Param, tad eshabhyukta, Satyam Jnanam Anantam Brahma, Yo veda nihitamguhayam Parama

Vyoman Sosnute sarvān kāmān saha Brahmanā Vipascitā iti' - (Taitti. up. II. 1. 1.)

The knower of Brahman reaches the Supreme. He who knows Brahman as the real, as Knowledge and as the infinite placed in the secret place of the heart and also in Parama Pada (the Highest Heaven), he realises all his desires along with Brahman Himself -

The same Taittiriya text in II,6.1. reiterates -

'Asann eva sa bhavati, asad Brahmeti veda cet,

Asti Brahmeti ced Veda,

Santam enam tato viduh' -

He who knows Brahman as non-existing, he verily himself becomes non-existent. He who knows Brahman as existing, him we know as existing -

Thus we observe that the very existence and non-existence of the self depends on the existence and non-existence of Knowledge which has for its object Brahman Himself -

The Kena upanishad very relevantly and succinctly resolves this controversy and answers to the point. The pertinent question is raised in the opening chapter of the upanishad in the following words :

' Keneshitam patati preshitam manah

Kena pranah prathamah praiti yuktah

Keneshitam vacam imām vadanti

Cakshuh srotram ka u devo yunakti' -

By whom desired and directed does the mind descend on its objects ? By whose command does life begin to throb for the first time ? At whose will do these people talk ? Who is that God that prompts the eye and the ear ?

The answer obviously is BRAHMAN, the Omnipotent, Omniscient, Omnipresent Parama Purusha who is the ear of the ear, the mind of the mind, the speech of the speech etc.,

'Na tatra cakshur gacchati na vag gacchati no manah'

'Navidmo, Navijānīmo' -

The eye goes not there, the speech reaches it not nor even the mind. We know it not; we understand it not; -

'Anyād eva tad viditād atho aviditād

Iti susruma purvesham ye nas tad vyacacakshire'-

It is other than the known; also it is above the unknown. Thus we have heard from the sages of yore who have explained it to us.

'Yad vaca nabhyuditam yena vag abhyudyate'

' *Tadeva Brahma tvam viddhi* nedam yed idam upasate'

'Yan Manasa na manute yenahur mano matam'

Tadeva Brahma tvam viddhi nedam yed idam upasate' Brahman is not that which is expressed by speech, but is that by which speech is expressed - Know it thou. Brahman is not that thought of by the mind; rather Brahman is that by which the mind is thought of

'Tadeva Brahman tvam viddhi' -

That is Brahman - you please understand.

' Yo nah tad veda tad veda no na vedeti veda ca' -

He who amongst us knows it, knows it and even he knows not that he does not know.

Finally the Kena upanishad says -

' Yasyāmatam tasya matam matam yasya na veda sah'

' Avijnātam Vijanatam Vijnatam avijānatam' -

"To whomsoever it is not known, to him it is known; to whomsoever it is known, he does not know. It is not understood by those who understand it. It is understood by those who do not understand it" - (Kena. up. II.3)

These seemingly absurd though really well-founded statements of the Kena text simply mean that Brahman is not thought and not understood by those who understood it to be of a definitely limited nature (Man's talents and approach are always

limited). Through these paradoxical assertions, the Upanishad wants to underline the fact that Brahman in *Truth is UNLIMITED*. One can know Brahman allright if the really strives for it. No one can know Brahman fully because of His illimitable attributes and His infinite being. That is all and nothing more.

'Atha yadatah Paro Divo Jyotirdīpyate' (Chand).

In Vaikuntha God evershines as Brilliance,

'Ya eshontaraditye hirnmayah Purusho drisyate' (Chand) God is seen by the sages in Surya mandala as possessing of a beautiful figure.

'Tasya yathā Kapyāsam pundarikameva akshinī' - (Chand) His eyes are like the lotus in blossom under the rays of the Sun.

'Etad ātmya midam sarvam, tatsatyam' (Chand).

This entire Universe is the body of Brahman.

'Etāvān asya mahimā tato jyāyāmsca Purushah'

'Pādosya sarva bhutani, tripād asyāmritam divi' (Chand. up III. 12,6)

Narayana usually addressed as Purusha is so great that all beings in this Universe are only an insignificant portion of Him. His major portion resides in Parama Pada.

'Vijnana sārathiryastu ,
Manah pragrahavannarah ,
So dhavanah paramapnoti,
Tadvishnoh Paramam padam' .

He who has the understanding and controls the reins of his mind, he surely reaches the end of the journey Paramapada, the residence of Vishnu. (Kath. up I. 3.9)

'Purushan na param kincit :
Sa kāshthā, sa parā gatih'. (Katha.up. I. 3.11)

Beyond Purusha namely Narayana there is nothing. That is the end (of the journey); that is the final goal.

'Visva-rupam harinam jāta-vedasam,
Parayanam jyotir ekam tapantam,
Sahasra - rasmih satadha vartamanah,
Prānah prjānām udayaty esha suryah' -

God who has the entire Universe as His body and who brought to light the Vedas, He always shines ever bright. The individual souls who seek shelter in this God called Hari, know everything and shine by his grace - (Prasno up. I. 8).

In the first half of this mantra of Prasnopanishad, every word refers to Narayana as could be seen thus :

a) VISVARUPAM - This refers to Narayana according to Purushasukta.

'Narayanam Visvatmanam' - The universe is the body of God. Similarly as in 'Visvarupaya vai namah' -

b) HARINAM - Narayana sukta says :

'Visvam Narayanam Harim' -

c) JATAVEDASAM - Usually Narayana who published the Vedas is called Jatavedasa - as said in Svetasvatara up. -

'Yo Brahmanam vidadhati purvam,
Yo vai vedamsca prahinoti tasmai' -
So also the word

d) PARAYANAM refers to Narayana - Narayana sukta says:

'Narayanam Mahajneyam Visvatmanam Parayanam' -

e) JYOTIH - This again refers to Narayana -

'Narayana parnjyotih' -

f) EKAM - Obviously Narayana and none else -

'DIVYODEVA EKO NARAYANAH' -

'Sarvasya vasi sarvasyesanah' - (Brih.up).

He has everything under his aegis. He is the Lord of everything.

'Yacca kimcit jagatyasmin drisyate sruyate pi va'

'Antarbahisca tatsarvam vyapya Narayanasthitah' (Taittiriya). Narayana has enveloped everything and has pervaded everything, whatever is seen or heard in this world.

'Yah sarvajnah sarva-vid yasyaisha mahima bhuvi'

'Divye Brahmapure hy esha vyomny atma pratishtitah'

He who is all-knowing, all-wise, such great purusha resides in Parama Pada (Mund. up. II. 2.7).

Sa yatha saumya vayamsi vaso vriksham sampratishthante'

Evam na vai tat sarvam para atmani sampratishthante' -

Just as the birds resort to the tree their dwelling place, so also all things here finally find their rest in the Supreme self namely NARAYANA. (Prasno. up. IV. 7.)

Taittiriyopanishad says (III, 6.1)

'Anando Brahmeti'- Bliss is Brahman.

Here once again it is necessary to point out that just as pure consciousness cannot be Brahman (as already established) Pure Bliss cannot also be Brahman. It is already proved that Brahman is 'Jnana Svarupa' because He is 'Jnanasraya' . Brahman in reality is the substrate of knowledge, not knowledge itself. It must be further understood that JNANA is 'Anandarupameva' - Bliss essentially is none other than a pleasing state of consciousness. Therefore passages in the Srutis such as 'Vijnānam Anandam Brahmeti - Consciousness, bliss in Brahman - simply mean that Brahman has Consciousness, the essential character of which is Bliss. So Brahman just as He has 'Jnatritva' He has also 'Jnananandítvam'. He is not mere Bliss but a subject enjoying bliss. The Mundaka up. (II. 2.8.) pertinently points out -'Ananda - rupam amritam yad vibhati' - Narayana the Para Brahman ever shines with the ambrosia of Heavenly Bliss -

'Eshahyevanandayati' - says the Taittiriya -

Narayana gives ananda to his adorers.

The concluding stanzas of the Narayana sukta says :

'Ritagam Satyam Param Brahma Purusham Krishna Pingalam'

'Ūrdhvaretam Virūpaksham Visvarupaya- vai namah'

'Narayanāya Vidhmahe Vasudevaya dhīmahi'

'Tannovishnuh pracodayat' -

Let us bow to Narayana who is Omnipresent, the Para Brahma and the Parama Purusha who has the entire Universe as His body. Let us reach Narayana. Let us meditate on Vasudeva. Let Vishnu help us. The last stanza in particular is called Vishnu-Gayatri Mantra.

The Narayanopanishad in its Samaveda siras says -

'Om ityekaksharam, Nama iti dve akshare, Narayanayeti pancaksharani, etadvai Narayanasyashtakshram padam' -

The Atharva siras of the same upanishad says -

'Sarvabhutasthamekam Narayanam, Karanarupamakara Parabrahmōm' -

Finally it is stated :

'Nārāyana sayujya mavāpnoti'

Obviously the Mantra 'Om Namo Narayanaya' is a eight - lettered one. The etymological meaning of 'Narayana' reveals the full philosophical connotation of the term.

NARAYANA is made of the two terms 'Nārā' and 'Ayana' , as is revealed in its definition -

'Naranam ayanam yah sah Narayanah' - Narayana is He who is the refuge and the dwelling place (ayanam) of all the eternal entities (the congregation of indestructibles), Naranam - 'Ra' is

derived from the dhatu RING meaning KSHAYE . It thus refers the destructibles, those that can be destroyed - The 'Na' negates it. Therefore 'NARA' means that which cannot be destroyed, and thus that which is eternal. 'Nārā' still further means 'the comity of the indestructibles, of the eternals' -

'AYANA' means that which provides shelter (Asraya), that which pervades and permeates (Vyapaka), that which is imminent (Antaryami), that which is means to an end (Upaya) and that which is also the end to be attained (Upeya).

So the full significance of the term ' NARAYANA' comes to this - 'Narah ayanam yasya sah Narayanah' - Narayana is the heaven of all the eternals. He is the eternal and the abiding principle of all that exists. He is imminent as also transcendent. The entire Universe of living and non-living beings is His body, His Sarira.

The Bhagavadgita emphasises the same idea in many of its stanzas :

'Yo mam ajam anadim ca vetti lokamahesvaram' - X.3.

He who knows me in reality as without birth and without beginning and also as the Supreme Lord of the Universe,

'Matsthani sarvabhutani na caham teshu avasthitah' IX.4. 'All beings abide in me, I abide not in them'

'Na ca matsthani bhutani pasya me yogamaisvaram'

'Bhutabhrinna ca bhutastho mamatma bhutabhavanah'

(IX.5). - Nay the beings do not abide in Me. But look at my Lordly Power. I bring forth the beings, support them; but I do not abide in them - 'Aham Kritsnasya jagatah prabhavah pralayastatha'

I am the origin and the dissolution of the entire Universe. (VII.6).

'Mattah Parataram nanyatkincidasti Dhananjaya'

' Mayi sarvamidam protam sutre mani-gana iva' - There is nothing else, Arjuna, higher than Me. On Me all this (this entire Universe) is strung as pearls on a thread. (VII.7)

'VISHTABHYAHAMIDAM kritsnam ekamsena sthito jagat' Pervading this entire Universe by a portion (of Mine) I abide. (X.42)

'Uttamah purushastvanyah paramatmeti udahritah'

'Yo lokatrayamavisya bibharti avyaya isvarah'

The highest person is called the highest self who pervading the three worlds supports them and is therefore also called the eternal Lord. (XV. 17).

'Yasmatksharam atitoham aksharadapi ca uttamah'

'Atosmi loke vede ca prathitah Purushottamah'

Because I transcend the perishable and am higher than the Imperishable even, I am celebrated in the world as well as in the Vedas as the Supreme Person. (XV. 18)

That the ultimate Reality namely the ONE and the ONLY BRAHMAN is not only a Saguna Brahman but a Purusha and is NARAYANA is not only established by the Srutis and the Bhagavadgita it is substantiated by the Vishnu Purana also in Chap. VI,5, 82-87.

It is pointed out there in Vishnu Purana that Vishnu or Brahman who is the Self of all, transcends the fundamental matter of all beings, its modifications, properties and imperfections, (Vikaran gunadidosamsca). He permeates all space. All auspicious qualities are said to constitute His nature and personality.- Samasta kalyanagunatmakosau. The entire creation of beings is said to be taken out of a small portion of His power. He assumes at Will whatever form He desires and confers benefits on the whole world effected by Him. (Meaning thereby that He comes down as AVATARS). All the higher gunas such as glory, strength, dominion, wisdom, energy power and other attributes have gathered into a coherent mass in Him. He is the

Supreme Ruler and the greatest of the Great (Parah paranam). He is the Lord in toto and lord in each - (Sa Isvaro vyashti samashti rupo). He is Himself both the unmanifest and the manifest (Avyakta svarupah, prakata svarupah).

The Purana then suggests that this Almighty God, the cause of all causes, the Highest Brahman can be suitably named BHAGAVAT.

In BHAGAVAT, 'BHA' reveals two meanings namely 'Cherisher' and 'Supporter' - 'Sambharteti tathā bhartā bhakaro arthadvayānvitah' -

The letter 'GA' in BHAGAVAT implies, the Leader, the Mover, the Creator -

'Netā gamayitā srashtā gakarārthah tathā' -

So,'BHAGA' with the two syllables 'BHA' and 'GA' signifies the SIX attributes namely Sovereignty (Aisvarya), Might (Samagra), Resplendent Majesty (Virya), Renown (Yasasassriyah), Wisdom (Jnana) and the spirit of Resignation [illegible]

To Quote :

'Aisvaryasya Samagrasya Vīryasya Yasasassriyah'

'JnanaVairagyayoscaiva Shannām Bhaga itiranā' (Vishnu Purana). After the two syllables 'BHA' and 'GA' comes the letter 'VA' . This 'VA' indicates that in that Universal SELF, the ONE and The One and the ONLY SELF of all the beings namely NARAYANA or BRAHMAN all beings dwell and similarly He the Supreme dwells in all beings. To quote from Vishnu Purana :

'Vasanti tatra bhutani bhutatmani akhilatmani'

'Sa ca bhuteshu avasesheshu Vakararthah tato avyayah'.

So the term 'BHAGAVAT', with its three component syllables 'BHA', 'GA' and 'VA' significantly invites our attention to the ONE Great GOD without even the trace of any evil qualities, with the Great Six attributes namely, Jnana, Sakti,

Bala, Aisvarya, Virya and Tejas, who lives not only by Himself but also in all His Creations and in whom the entire Universe (consisting of the moving and the unmoving) lives and has its being. In short the term BHAGAVAT not only points to the Greatness of GOD with all His ascendent attributes but also to both His imminence and transcendence.

Vishnu Purana then points out that this word BHAGAVAT is the name of VASUDEVA, who is the Highest BRAHMAN and of none else.

So it comes to this compelling conclusion that BRAHMAN is NARAYANA, Narayana is none other than BHAGAVAT and Bhagavan is VASUDEVA -

To quote Vishnu Purana :

'Evamesha Mahasabdo Maitreya Bhagavaniti'

'Parabrahmabhutasya Vasudevasya Nanyagah'.

THE VYUHAS

BEFORE PROCEEDING further with the concept of the Vyuhas, it is desirable to survey the ground already covered. The Ultimate One and the only Reality namely BRAHMAN is called in Pancaratra Para-Vasudeva. He is the one Lord NARAYANA who has in Himself the six Gunas in their perfection. He is Shadgunyaparipurna. This Para-Vasudeva in His own abode Vaikuntha with His consorts (in the form of Tattvas) SRI, BHUMI and NILA is ever waited upon and attended to by the Suris, Nityas and the Muktas (the liberated souls). He is also adorned with weapons and ornaments. These weapons and ornaments are once again Tattvas. We should not mistake them for the ordinary weapons and ornaments that we know of. They are considered as symbolic of angels invested with regency over various departments of the Lord's realm and also comprehending the totality of souls and bodies in the Universe. Their significance and import are well explained in Vishnu Purana. In fact chapter XXII of the First book of Sri Vishnu Purana is designated as 'Astra-bhushana adhyaya'.

As quoted in Vishvaksena samhita, this transcendental Lord has Himself admitted that He has revealed Himself in FIVE forms, in five manifestations - Panca Prakaras -

"Mama prak ārāh panceti pr āhuh Vedanta pāragāh

Paro Vyuhasca Vibhavo niyantā sarvadehinām,

Arcavatarsca tatha dayāluh Purush ākritih".

The five-fold manifestations of the Lord as admitted by the Lord Himself and spoken of by the seers are :

i. Paratva	- The	"Manifestation Supreme"
ii. Vyuha	- The	"Manifestation operative"
iii. Vibhava	- The	"Manifestation distinctive"
iv. Antaryamitva	- The	"Manifestation pervasive"
v. Arcavatara	- The	"Manifestation worshipable".

These five forms of the Lord, His manifestations form the heart and soul of the philosophy of the Pancaratras.

Lord Vishnu's personality, for purposes of human understanding, is compared to that of an all-powerful Sovereign who has absolute suzerainty over the entire earth. Such a monarch, in all his regal glory and splendour will often give an audience to the elite and the chosen few in his royal court. This is said to be similar to the Para-Svarupa of the Lord in His Nityavibhuti. It is said to be His Prathama Svarupa, the first prakara of the Lord.

To look after the welfare and the well-being of His people the king assumes the role of the supreme administrator and dispensor of justice and fairplay. He establishes courts of justice to punish the offenders and provide redress to the honest and the good. This role is said to be akin to the second Svarupa of the Lord, the Vyuha svarupa. To cope with the duties devolving on Himself in His Lilavibhuti, the Lord is said to have established His Supreme court of appeal at Kshirabdhi, the milky ocean.

The monarch often goes on a hunting spree into the overgrown forests and kills the offending animals that are a source of menace to the peace-loving denizens. That is compared to the Vibhava Svarupa of the Lord, His third form. This coincides with the role of incarnations the Lord has assumed in the form of Rama, Krishna etc., to annihilate the wicked and provide succour to the good like the God-loving Rishis of the forest and the ever devoted Pandavas. This is the Vibhava of the Lord, culminating in His frequent descensions, Avataras to help the good, destroy the wicked and re-establish dharma on earth.

A conscientious king often moves about unnoticed amidst his subjects incognito, in disguise just to know for himself their loyalty or otherwise. This is compared to the unseen presence of the Lord in each and everyone of the living beings, and primarily in men. It is called Antaryamitva, the fourth form of the Lord.

Fulfilling his routine responsibilities of daily administration, the king has often recourse to pleasure resorts with his select retinue for purposes of recreation and relaxation. His holidaying in His choice places of rest is compared to the fifth and the last prakara of God, namely the Arcavatara. God in the form of idols is often enshrined in famous temples on picturesque hill tops, like Venkatadri, Yadavadri, Hastyadri, Vrishabhadri etc., and also in select spots of natural splendour and scenic beauty on the banks of famous rivers such as the Kaveri, the Tamraparni etc. It is such holy shrines that are highly sung in praise by the Alwars of Sri Vaishnavism.

So far I have endeavoured to present the first manifestation of the Supreme Being, His Paratva. This Parasvarupa is also called Nityodita (ever awake, ever active), unlike the Santodita aspect of His, in which form He will be active for sometime and for some other time inactive, at rest (santa). In fact the Santodita aspect of the Lord emanates from His Nityodita form, from Para-Vasudeva Himself. It is this Santodita form of the Lord that is entirely responsible for the manifestation of the Vyuhas and to begin with the Samkarshana vyuha. Just as the Nityodita aspect of Lord Narayana is called Para-Vasudeva (Vasudeva in His Nitya Vibhuti), the Santodita aspect of the Lord is called Vyuha Vasudeva (Vasudeva in His Lilavibhuti). He is called Santodita, to repeat again because He will be awake and active only at the time of Vyuha creativity and at other times He will be at rest. Anyway it is this Vyuha-Vasudeva that is the immediate and the first source of emanation of the Vyuhas.

Before going into this concept of the Vyuhas in all its details, it is necessary to remark in terms of what the Padmatantra says in I, 2.21. That the Pancaratra philosophy provides us a wonderful

vision, opens up a wonderful vista of a chain of emanations in the form of one flame proceeding from another flame. Of course there is no prior emanation for the original blaze, the Paranjyoti, the flame of Vyuha Vasudeva, the Santodita aspect of Lord Narayana, the Para Brahman Himself. This one Vyuha Vasudeva in the process of emanation issues forth into a pair of gunas - That is exactly the cosmic flow from the one into the many, the emergence of the many from the one Divine essence. Though this out-flow into the many is there in the form of emergence into pairs of Gunas, we must remember at the same time the source continues to remain unchanged. It is in no way affected by its outpourings. (That is why the Upanishads have often asserted - Isavasyam idam sarvam yat kim ca jagatyam jagat and also Purnasya purnamadaya purnameva avasisyate). The successive first three emanations from the original unitary flame, Paranjyoti, the santodita form are called Vyuhas. The term Vyuha is made up of the two roots 'UH' and 'VI' - the root 'UH' meaning 'to push out' or 'eject' and the root 'VI' meaning 'apart'. Obviously Vyuha means emergence into distinct many having emitted out or darted forth from the one unitary Divine source, the original jyothi of Vasudeva. This term Vyuha occurs particularly in the Mahabharata meaning deployment of forces in military operations. The Isa upanishad (16) makes mention of the term Vyuha -

'Vyuha raśmīn samuha tejah' - in the sense of spreading forth the rays and again gathering up the radiance -

Vyuha is usually designated as divine fulgurations, divine splits, divine emission or emanation. It is also sometimes referred to as 'conglomeration' (particularly prominently of a pair of Gunas).

It is detailed in the Pancaratra samhitas that the three special forms of Vasudeva namely Samkarshana, Pradyumna and Aniruddha are the Vyuhas. But the Vyuhas are sometimes considered as four in number taking into account the Vyuha-Vasudeva, the Santodita aspect of Paravasudeva also as a Vyuha being the source of all subsequent emissions, being the basic

source and nexus of the three emanations, Samkarshana, Pradyumna and Aniruddha -

'Caturatmya sthitih Vishnoh guna vyatikarodbhava'

It is said, from Vyuha Vasudeva the first Vyuha to emanate is SAMKARSHANA with the predominance of the two qualities of God namely Jnana (knowledge) and Bala (the capacity for untiring creation, unceasing work).

The second Vyuha to emerge from Samkarshana is PRADYUMNA with the two dominant attributes of Aisvarya (spontaneous exuberance of energy) and Virya (unaffectedness in spite of change).

The third and the last Vyuha to come forth from Pradyumna is ANIRUDDHA, with the prevailing two traits of Sakti (the power that transforms itself into the world forms) and Tejas (non-dependence on accessories).

In other words Vyuha means emanation and transformation of the six predominant attributes of Vasudeva into three patent pairs. Sometimes it is even expressed in the following way.

From Jnana and Bala the spiritual form of Samkarshana is produced.

From Aisvarya and Virya the spiritual form of Pradyumna is generated.

From Sakti and Tejas the spiritual form of Aniruddha is brought about.

The six perfect Gunas, Jnana, Bala, Aisvarya, Virya, Sakti and Tejas that are in Para Vasudeva (Nityodita) are equally in Vyuha Vasudeva (Santodita) also in their identical perfection. The only difference is in the locus or location of the Gunas, in the difference of the Vigraha, the person in which they reside and not at all in their essential nature, intensity or perfection. So much so it comes to this that in the last resort Vishnu the Supreme Himself is the Para, the Vyuha Vasudeva and all the three Vyuhas of

course in successive but different emanations. Therefore all the six Gunas of Vishnu the Para Vasudeva are to be found in all the Vyuhas Samkarshana, Pradyumna and Aniruddha including Vyuha Vasudeva the original source of emanations also taken as a Vyuha, in fact the first Vyuha itself. The point at issue to be noted is that while all the six Gunas are equally evident in each one of the Vyuhas namely Vyuha Vasudeva, Samkarshana, Pradyumna and Aniruddha, two Gunas in particular will be most dominant or explicit (Prakatya) in each one of the latter three Vyuhas as its distinctive marks or characteristic traits. The rest of the four Gunas will not be so explicit or preponderant. The pre-eminence of a pair of Gunas excelling the other four in particular in each of the three Vyuhas of Samkarshana, Pradyumna and Aniruddha is obviously in strict accordance with the roles these Vyuhas have to play, the functions they have to perform. The prominent roles of the Vyuhas are explained as generally three in many of the Samhitas :

i. Creation, maintenance and dissolution of the Universe.

ii. Taking care of the well-being of the embodied souls of the house-holders who pursue the Purusharthas of Dharma, Artha and Kama.

iii. And finally bestowing release on those highly evolved souls who are after the prime Purushartha of Moksha. Each Vyuha has its specific role and it will be discussed under specific heads.

In this blazing linked series of flames, the first torch is held by Vyuha Vasudeva with all the six Gunas in full flare. Then from this Vasudeva two of the six Gunas Jnana and Bala flash out and consolidate into Samkarshana. In this second flame again two gunas dominate namely Aisvarya and Virya spark out and compound into Pradyumna. Finally from the flame of Pradyumna again two gunas Sakti and Tejas prevail, push out and compose into Aniruddha. The chain of flames is all distinct flames only with all the six gunas as these gunas are in the very constitution of the divine flame.

'Vyāptimātram gunonmesho murthikara iti tridha,
Caturātmya - sthitirvishnor gunavyatikarodbhava'

- A.S.V. 21.

Thus though in each Vyuha 2 Gunas predominate, each Vyuha is said to possess the six qualities (shadguna) of the Lord as these Vyuhas are but the manifestations of Vishnu the Lord Himself.

(Note: Each one of these Vyuha forms is said to have existed for 1600 years for each lower form to pass into the next higher form).

SAMKARSHANA :

Though he possesses all the six qualities, in terms of his assignation he displays prominently the two qualities of Jnana and Bala only.

First of all he is considered to be the supervisor of all individual souls and is said to separate the individual souls from Prakriti. Visvaksena samhita and Varavara's commentary on Lokacharya's Tattvatraya page 125 (Tattvatraya page 133) allude to it.

'Soyam samastajīvārām adhishtatritayā sthitah'
'Jivatattvam adhishtaya prakritestu vivicya tat'.

He is said to enter the amorphous mass of Prakrititattva, stir up the mass of bound souls that are in an anomalous condition, separate them from the chaotic primordial matter and finally he renders them distinguishable by name and form.

He then is said to assume the form of Pradyumna.

By the agency of the Guna Jnana he is said to reveal the scriptures known chiefly as the Veda and the Pancaratra.

At last he is said to effect the dissolution of the Universe also with the other Guna, Bala.

PRADYUMNA :

Just as Samkarshana reveals the predominance of the two gunas of Jnana and Bala for the sake of the two functional roles of Śāstrapradana and Samhāra, Pradyumna similarly reveals the predominance of the two gunas Aisvarya (Lordship) and Virya (inexhaustibility or endurance) for the sake of his two important assignments of (i) Suddhavarga srishti (creation of pure beings) and (ii) Dharmopadesa (instructive discourses on the performance of right duties) respectively.

Pradyumna is also called Vira. First of all he is said to stir up the intrinsic sense or inward knowing organ namely Manas and is said to superintend the mind (the manas) of all beings.

Secondly with the help of the guna Virya he is said to give instructions on the practical ways of conducting oneself and performing religious rites and such others in conformity to the scriptural knowledge as vouchsafed by Samkarshana. It is through the influence of Pradyumna that men are actuated to perform their work in accordance with the Sastras (Ahirbudhnya .Sam. L. V. 18)

Thirdly with the help of the guna Aisvarya Pradyumna is said to create pure beings consisting of the four Manus and their impeccable descendants. He is said to be responsible for the creation of all human beings and even among them those that have dedicated their all to God and ever attached to Him. (Ref. Visvaksena Sam. and Tattvatraya, pp. 126-127). In short it is Pradyumna that is said to have launched the saga of pure creation. (Suddha Varga Srishti).

ANIRUDDHA :

As with the other two, though he has all the six gunas in himself he portrays in himself the dominance of the two gunas Sakti and Tejas. Power and glory for purposes of protecting and sustaining the Universe on the one hand (Jagat Dharana and Rakshana) and of imparting knowledge (Jnana pradana),

instituting cosmic time (Kala srishti) and launching the creative process of mixed beings (Misra srishti) on the other hand.

Aniruddha is also called Mahavishnu, as he is the God of Power and Tejas. It is through his efforts that the creation and maintenance of the world are possible. It is Aniruddha who is said to make the world grow.

First of all by the agency of the guna Sakti, he protects the world.

Secondly he provides the souls with the required wisdom that leads to salvation. This he does by the agency of the guna Tejas.

Thirdly he sets in motion cosmic time (Kala srishti) again by the agency of Tejas.

Finally with the help of Tejas he sets off on the course of mixed creation (Misra varga srishtim ca karoti - Tattvatraya, p. 128) He creates the group mixed beings, beings who no longer possess faultless virtues but reveal mixed traits of both good and evil. (Visvaksena saṃhita).

These three Vyuhas are called the pure avatars of God (namely of Vishnu). Though these are of three forms (excluding Vyuha Vasudeva) they are but one in reality. It is seen each vyuha is having activities associated with it.

(i) One in relation to creation, the origin of beings,

(ii) and another in relation to their moral being and ethical progress.

Each one of these activities of a vyuha according to Tattvatraya and the Samhitas is sponsored by one of the two dominant gunas, the hallmarks of the Vyuhas.

It is further seen that the creativity invariably precedes the moral and the spiritual discipline (activity).

It is also observed that the Gunas are manifest only at the time of activity or active creativity - Sramabhumayah -

They are however unmanifest or dormant at the period of rest - Visramabhurnayah -

According to the Pancaratra samhitas Samkarshana is 'Asesha Bhuvana dhara' - the support of the entire Universe, the basis or the foundation for the entire gross Universe. He is said to carry with him the whole universe as if it were just a tiny spot at the parting of the hairs - Tilakalaka . Lakshmi tantra says that to begin with the Universe which Samkarshana carries as a tiny speck on his head is in a molecular or germinal condition - Mashrno Vikarah - i.e. in an as yet unmanifest or unevolved form.

It is further pointed that all the sastras are for the first time produced by Samkarshana and released for the world. So also they are said to disappear again in him, in Samkarshana during Pralaya, at the time of dissolution - Ref: Ahirbudhnya Sam. L.V. 16.

It is from Pradyumna that Prakriti and Purusha are said to emerge for the first time, from what was in Samkarshana in an amorphous condition. The Ahirbudhnya samhita says that it is Pradyumna who makes possible both Manava sarga and Vaidya sarga, the creation of group soul as also of primordial matter with time.

'Manunām samāhāro brahmakshatrādibhedinām - VI. 9

'Sukshmakālagunāvasthā sudarsana samīritā ..... karnādudīritā - VI - 12.

It is this Pradyumna that is entirely responsible for Suddhavarga srishti Creation of Suddha varga - Pure uncorrupted God-loving honest beings. God in the form and person of Pradyumna it is reported first of all creates the four 'Mithunas' in terms of both the sexes, masculine and feminine counterparts from His face, arms, thighs and feet to fecilitate and promote the generation of the four classes of people, the Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and Sudras. These original four 'Mithunas' are designated for the first time as 'Manus'. These original four

pairs of Manus procreate independently into a hundred progenies each of their own class. In other words each pair of a type begets a hundred 'Mithunas'. Thus four hundred couples are generated and they are called the 'Manavas' - Once again the four classes of the four hundred couples each create a hundred Mithunas and the total population of what these Manavas beget is called 'Manava-manavas'. It is further computed that what these forty thousand pairs once again beget in terms of a hundred Mithunas each comes to a total of forty lakhs of couples under each of the four categories of Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Sudra. They are called 'Manushyas' - Men. Thus the original ancestors of the present family of man, the race of mankind in all its four-fold classifications of Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Sudra (including the broader categories of Manus, Manavas, Manavamanavas and Manushyas) consisted of an exact number of forty lakhs forty thousand four hundred and four original couples - 4040404 (pairs). This is how it is calculated in the Samhita under the caption - 'Suddhavarga Srishti'.

These original ancestors never knew what craving and lust, jealousy and hate were. They were always honest and sincere. They never worshipped any minor deities or ordinary Vedic Gods for profits or returns. They were always engaged in Nishkama Karma. They were wise scholars, adepts in Vedanta. Their only ambition was God-realisation. They were after Moksha and nothing short of it. Since they comprised a race of honest lovers of God, a generation of Pure Souls (Suddha Varga) the creation of these beings by God in the form of Pradyumna, was called Suddhavarga srishti.

Aniruddha with the two portfolios of Jagadbharana and Tattvabodhana is an all important Vyuha who makes possible the growth of body and mind out of the creation by Pradyumna. Aniruddha is said to be actually the ruler of the cosmos - It is Aniruddha who is said to have evolved manifest matter with gross time. Also it is this Aniruddha that is said to have brought about Misra Srishti - the so-called mixed creation, creation of the mixed species (Misravarga).

Misravarga srishti -means the creation of beings of a mixed character, beings of the type of us, ordinary mortals with all the frailties and foibles of ordinary human nature. Aniruddha creates a Caturmukha Brahma first and out of this Brahma's face, arms, thighs and feet the usual four classes of beings ensue. These are not of the Sattvic type as under pure creation, Suddha srishti. They are on the other hand of the Rajasic type. These are not even aware of the Supreme Brahman, the Almighty God Vasudeva. Most of them perform the rituals and sacrifices as enjoined in the Brahmana portion of the Vedas, worship the vedic Gods such as Indra, Varuna, Agni etc., and follow the path of Kamya Karmas. They are deeply immersed in the pleasures of the world and worship the Vedic Gods only for material benefits and even for the pleasures of Svarga after death. Birth and rebirth are their lot. They never know of Moksha, liberation from the cycle of births and deaths and they never aspire for Para Vasudeva, the redeemer of all evils and the ultimate resort of all Mumukshus. Since Aniruddha's creation is of the type of these men (Misravarga) it is called Misravarga srishti.

Why this Misravarga srishti ? - if it is asked the answer is, it is for the world process to go on. If there is no confrontation for the good and no clash with evil there is neither activity nor necessity for God. Further God wants to provide opportunities for the ignorant and the wicked also to sin and repent so that some day they can turn towards Him and seek His grace. In other words Misra srishti is a must in the context of the settings and schedule of this world, the Lila Vibhuti of God, the NARAYANA.

Samkara Bhagvatpada in his commentary on the Vedanta - Sutras - II. 2. 42. gives quite a different account of the Vyuhas. According to him,

Samkarshana stands for the individual soul,

Pradyumna stands for manas,

Aniruddha stands for the ego - namely Ahankara. However the views expressed by Samkara are not endorsed by the Pancaratra samhitas.

In some of the Pancaratra samhitas names of certain Gods and Goddesses are sometimes mentioned symbolising certain Saktis as identical with the Gods and Goddesses mentioned in some of the later Puranas. This is exactly similar to importing the later ideas of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas as constituting Prakriti at the time of Vyuha creative activity. This is preposterous for the simple reason that these later ideas of Gods and Goddesses cannot possibly be even conceived at the time of the birth of the Vyuhas. It is only in the subsequent emanations far ahead that particular deities are evolved. So also even before the gross mundane world born of Prakriti constituted of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas could be made possible of manifestation how could we foist these later ideas on earlier conceptions that actually pave the way for the birth of these later concepts. This is as incongruous as Otto Schrader stating in his introduction to the Pancaratra that the Vyuhas are named after the brother, the son and the grandson respectively of Krishna. (p. 35). This is exactly putting the cart before the horse What a time gap between the period of the Vyuhas and the subsequent period of the Vibhava avataras. It should be actually that the brother, son and grandson of Krishna are named after the very ancient Vyuhas.

Unfortunately in some of the Samhitas we find the same error creeping. For instance Mahasanatkumara samhita states that Vasudeva creates the white Goddess Shanti from His mind and that with her creates Samkarshana, that Samkarshana once again creates Goddess SRI, that the son of SRI is Pradyumna or Brahma, that Pradyumna again creates the yellow Saraswati and that Pradyumna and Saraswati together bring forth Aniruddha or Purushottama and that Purushottama's Sakti is the black Rati and so on and so forth. All these Gods and Goddesses are actually presumed outside the egg of the mundane world - Bahirandaja -

In Lakshmi Tantra (V chapter) also we get passages with similar anachronisms - That Brahman and Saraswati create an Egg and that Vishnu and Lakshmi lie down in it, that from Vishnu's navel pit there springs the sacrificial lotus and that from the lotus are born again Brahman and Saraswati - and so on and so forth.

There are some conflicting views expressed in the different Tantras sometimes about the Vyuhas and their roles. For instance Laksmi Tantra says : The cosmic function of Aniruddha is Creating -

That of Pradyumna is preserving and that of Samkarshana is destroying.

On the other hand Visvaksena samhita says that Pradyumna by his Guna Aisvarya creates the totality of the moving and the unmoving.

That Aniruddha by means of his Guna Sakti supports and protects the entire Universe, 'the infinite egg', and that Samkarshana by means of his Guna Bala destroys the entire creation and takes them all away.

Similarly in Visvaksena samhita as quoted in Tattvatraya it is stated it is Samkarshana who separates the principle of life from nature and then becomes Pradyumna.

On the other hand in Ahirbudhnya samhita it is stated that it is not at the stage of Samkarshana that the differentiation between Purusha (the principle of life) and Prakriti (nature) starts; rather it is at the stage of Pradyumna.

So also while Ahirbudhnya samhita (V 21-24) and Lakshmi Tantra (IV 15-20) have stated that Samkarshana gives the knowledge of the Sastras, particularly wisdom of the Ekantika marga, that Pradyumna teaches the practical side of it (Tat kriya) and that Aniruddha speaks of the gains to be accrued by following the marga (Kriya phala), Tattvatraya quotes Visvaksena samhita as saying:

That the teachings of Samkarshana are not confined to Pancaratra only but also to the vedic esoteric doctrines.

That Pradyumna enunciates all the religious rites to be performed by a Pancaratrin.

And that Aniruddha gives a clear insight into the goal of the Pancaratra cult namely attaining liberation.

Whatever be the differences in the functions assigned to the three Vyuhas and the role of the predominant Gunas in the Vyuhas we may be rest assured that the three cosmic functions of creation, sustenance and destruction are assigned to the three Vyuhas.

Apart from some instances of minor disagreements between the samhitas, on the whole all the Samhitas are agreed on broad lines over the Vyuhas, their nature and functional roles. We can broadly feature the Vyuhas as performing three different roles :

i. The creation, sustenance and dissolution of the world,

ii. The protection of mundane beings,

iii. Helping ardent devotees to attain salvation.

From each one of these four Vyuhas, Vasudeva, Samkarshana, Pradyumna and Aniruddha, three sub-vyuhas or subsidiary vyuhas called "Vyuhantara" or "Murtyantara" are said to make their descent. (Avatirnah). Thus twelve sub-vyuhas in all are said to have emanated as follows:

(i) From Vasudeva Vyuha

a) Kesava, b) Narayana, c) Madhava.

(ii) From Samarshana Vyuha-

a) Govinda, b) Vishnu, c) Madhusudana.

(iii) From Pradyumna Vyuha-

a) Trivikrama, b) Vamana, c) Sridhara

(iv) From Aniruddha Vyuha-

a) Hrishikesha, b) Padmanabha, c) Damodara.

The twelve deities are said to be the Lords of the twelve months in the year/Masadhipah as Mahasanatkumara samhita says. They are considered to represent the twelve Suns in each of the Rashis and are regarded as superintending each month. Thus they are said to be the Adhidaivata of the twelve months and the twelve suns. This Dvadasa murthis (12) are conceived for purposes of meditation. It is believed that they protect the body and person of a devotee if represented on the body at stipulated places and meditated upon. They are therefore also called "Urdhvapundra Sthanadhipatis" - Ordinarily Orthodox Srivaishnavas present the Urdhvapundra, the vertical lines on the forehead only. But according to the strict Srivaishnava sampradaya the Urdhvapundra must be represented at twelve different places on the body. They are said to have great esoteric and beneficial influence. In fact each one of these twelve deities has His own Devi, Varna, Ayudha, Dik and a stipulated place of presentation on the body (Urdhvapundra sthana) as follows:

1. Kesava
   a) Devi - SRI
   b) Varna - Kanakaprabha
   c) Ayudha - 4 chakras (Chakradhara)
   d) Dik - Purastat
   e) Urdhvapundra sthana - Lalata

2. Narayana
   a) Amritodbhava
   b) Nilamegha prabha
   c) 4 Śankhas
   d) Paścāt
   e) Madhyakukshi

3. Madhava
   a) Kamalā
   b) Manibhangābha
   c) 4 Gadhas
   d) Urdhva
   e) Vakshasthala

4. Govinda a) Candrasobhini
b) Candraprabha
c) 4 Samgas
d) Dakshina parsva
e) Kant(h)a

5. Vishnu a) Vishnupatni
b) Padmakinjalka vama
c) 4 Halas
d) Uttara
e) Dakshina kukshi

6. Madhusudana (a) Vaishnavi
b) Padmasannibha
c) 4 Musalas
d) Agneya
e) Dakshina bhuja

7. Trivikrama (a) Vararoha
b) Agnivama
c) 4 Khadgas
d) Nairutya
e) Dakshinamsa

8. Vamana a) Harivallabha
b) Bala Suryabha
c) 4 Vajras
d) Vayavya
e) Vamakukshi

9. Sridhara a) Samgani
b) Pundarikabha
c) 4 Pattasas
d) Aisanya
e) Vamabahu

10. Hrishikesa (a) Devadevi
 b) Thatitprabha
 c) 4 Mudgaras
 d) Avacya
 e) Varnamsu

11. Padmanabha (a) Mahalakshmi
 b) Sahasrarka prabha
 c) Sarvayudha
 d) Hritpadma
 e) Udara prisht(h)a

12. Damodara (a) Loka Sundari
 b) Indragopanibha
 c) 4 Pasas
 d) Bahyabhyantara
 e) Kant(h)a prisht(h)a

In Padma Tantra and some other texts such as Vihagendra and Mahasanatkumara samhitas mention is made of a set of twelve Vidyesvaras that are said to have descended from the four Vyuhas. These Vidyesvaras with the twelve sub-vyuhas are sometimes together called 'Caturvimsati Murtayah" - the twentyfour forms of deities.

THE VIBHAVAS

Yatindramata dipika says about VIBHAVA -
'Vibhavo nama tat-tat-sajatiyarupena avirbhavah'

IT IS God's descent into any form of a member of the class of Deva, Tiryak, Manushya or Sthavara. It is God's Avatara or Incarnation in the form of a super-human, human, animal or any other type of a being. It is believed that God's Vibhava avatars are so numerous that no accurate enumeration is possible.

The Vibhavas are discussed well in the ninth Pariccheda of Sattvata samhita and the fifty sixth adhyaya of Ahirbudhnya.

Anyhow the Vibhavas are enumerated as generally thirty nine (39) in number in most of the Samhitas. They are considered as the principal manifestations, Avatars or descents, that is incarnations of God the Supreme or of His Vyuhas or even of His Sub-Vyuhas. The usual number of 39 principal Vibhava avatars listed in some of the Samhitas are as follows :

1. Padmanabha
2. Dhruva
3. Ananta
4. Satyakama
5. Madhusudana,
6. Vidyadhideva,
7. Kapila,
8. Visvarupa,
9. Vihangama,
10. Krodhatman,
11. Bad(h)abavaktra,
12. Dharma,
13. Vagisvara,
14. Ekarnavasayin,
15. Kamat(h)esvara,
16. Varaha,
17. Narasimha,
18. Piyushaharana,
19. Sripathi,
20. Kantatman,
21. Rahujit,
22. Kalanemighna,
23. Parijatahara,
24. Lokanatha,

25. Santatman,
26. Dattatreya,
27. Nyagrodhasayin,
28. Ekasringatanu,
29. Vamandeha,
30. Trivikrama,
31. NARA,
32. Narayana,
33. Hari,
34. Krishna,
35. Parasurama,
36. Ramadhanurdhara,
37. Vedavid,
38. Kalkin,
39. Patala sayana,

Of these 39 Vibhavavataras 10 are picked up in the Narayaniya section of the Santiparva of the Mahabharata namely:

9. Vihangama (Hamsa),
15. Kamathesvara (Kurma),
28. Ekasringatanu (Matsya)
16. Varaha
17. Narasimha,
29. Vamandeha
35. Parasurama,
36. Ramadhanurdhara,
37. Vedavid,
38. Kalkin.

Ekarnavasayin - (14)

Vishnu represented as leaning on Lakshmi on the original waters -

' nishannam bhogisayyayam (Sattvata Samhita) XII.66

'Padmayā saha Vidyayā apsu suśayanam cakre' - (Lakshmi Tantra)

Padmanabha - (1).

Vishnu is represented as growing from His navel the lotus from which Brahman is to emerge.

Nyagrodha say in - (27)

Vishnu represented as the male child floating on the Nyagrodha branch in whose mouth Markandeya discovered the wound up Universe.

Patalasayanam - (39)

Vishnu represented as the 'Lord of the Cataclysmic fire' clad in a bright robe, waited upon by Lakshmi, Cinta, Nidra and Pushti. (as explained in Sattvata samhita).

Nara, Narayana, Hari, Krishna (not of Dvapara Yuga). Sl. Nos. 31-34.

These are Vishnu represented as appearing as the four sons of Dharma and Ahimsa. The Sattvata samhita describes them as 4 ascetics robed in deer skin - the first reciting mantras, the second deeply absorbed in meditation, the third counselling on meritorious works and the fourth practising austerities.

Vamana and Trivikrama (29-30)

Lord Vishnu representing the two opposite aspects :

Vishnu as the very little one, as a midget (Hrit-Sthah) and as the all-encompassing or the all-pervading one (Sarva-vyapin or Trailokya Puraka) - as the Taittiriya Up. says -

'Anoranīyān, mahato mahīyān'

Madhusudana - (30)

Refers to Vishnu's Victory over the demon Madhu or rather Madhu and Kait(h)aba.

ANANTA - (3)

Vishnu or more correctly His Vyuha appearing as Bala Rama.

Kapila - (7)

In Padma Tantra and Vishnu tilaka represented as Vishnu appearing as the teacher of the Nagas.

Ahirbudhnya sam. refers to the author of the Samkhyas as a manifestation.

Krodhatma - (10)

As Sattvata sam. says - it is none other than Vishnu as the Yajna Varaha or Yajna Sukara - a particular aspect of the Boar incarnation.

Lokanatha - (24).

This points to Manu Vaivasvata who was rescued from the overwhelming waters of the great deluge (Pralaya) by Brahman as a fish and made the secondary creator of all living beings.

Kantatman - (20)

Described in Sattvata samhita as a handsome youth with glamorous eyes - so to say as Pradyumna or Kama reborn (after his destruction by Siva) as the son of Krishna.

In Ahirb. Sam. he is described as 'Amrita-dharaka' - the person carrying Nectar, the heavenly ambrosia, thus directly referring to Dhanvantari the physician of the Gods or Dadhibhakta.

Dattatreya - (26)

The reputed sage and son of Atri maharshi and Anusuya.

Vedavid - (37)

According to Sattvata sam. it is Vedavyasa.

Dhruva - (2).

The famous Rishi and Pole-star celebrated in Sattvata samhita as the bearer of the Adhara Sakti.

Vagisvara - (13)

He is Hayasirsha or Hayagriva.

Santatman - (25).

Either Sanatkumara (Sanaka) or Narada as the expounder of the Sattvata system.

The Sattvata samhita describes him as - "having a disposition full of compassion, carrying the conch and the lotus in his hands and revealing the threefold path of Knowledge , Renunciation and Virtuous deeds" -

Sakyatman - (4)

It is Vishnu as 'Iccha - rupadhara' - Sattvata sam. says this is the Avatara Vishnu assumes in any particular form as prayed for by the devotee.

Vidyadhideva - (6).

It is the Four-faced Brahman - "the Lord of Viraj"

Visvarupa - (8)

This is the form in which Vishnu appears to Arjuna as depicted in the famous Visvarupa adhyaya - (Eleventh canto of the Bhagavadgita).

Bad(h)abavaktra - (11).

It is AURVA.

DHARMA - (12).

It is Vishnu Himself as Dharma personified.

Piyushaharana - (18)

Also called 'Amrtaharana' - It is Vishnu represented as the restorer of immortality to the Gods.

SRIPATHI - (19)

Vishnu represented as the husband of SRI or Lakshmi as referred to in the anecdote of the churning of the ocean.

It also refers to Dadhibhakta - mentioned among the chief avatars in Visvaksena samhita. It is to Him that Indra is said to owe the Amrta.

Amrtaharana is also an epithet of Garuda as the stealer of Amrita

Rahujit and Kalanemighna - (21 - 22)

Refers to Vishnu conquering RAHU and KALANEMI respectively.

Parijatahara - (23)

Refers to Krishna wresting away from Indra the celebrated Celestial tree.

Particularly in the Sattvata samhita (XII) and in the Ahirbudhnya samhita (LXVI) the above mentioned thirty nine Vibhava avatars are mentioned. They are all considered to be of the nature of TEJAS and are recommended as objects of worship and meditation.

But in Visvaksena samhita it is pointed out that the real original Avatars of a superior and transcendental nature are only thirty six in number. Numbers 7, 26, and 35 in the list of the 39 avatars namely Kapila, Dattatreya and Parasurama are deleted. Varavaramuni in his commentary on Tattvatraya also says that the real number of Vishnu's Vibhava avatars is only 36 and not 39 because Kapilas, Dattatreya and Parasurama are only secon dary avatars. (Avesa avatars) and not the primary ones.

There are divergent reports and sometimes varied explanations about the various avatars of God in the different samhitas. According to Visvaksena samhita all the Avatars are said to have descended straight from Aniruddha or through other avatars. Thus BRAHMAN comes from Aniruddha and from Brahman is said to have descended Mahesvara. Hayasirsha is said to have come from Matsya, a manifestation of Krishna. According to Padmatantra (I.2.31) Matsya, Kurma and Varaha avatars -

The three manifestations of prajapati as mentioned in Satapatha Brahmana are said to have come from Vasudeva:

Nrisimha, Vamana, Srirama and Parasurama are said to have issued forth from Samkarshana; Balarama is said to have arisen from Pradyumna and Krishna and Kalki are said to have emanated from Aniruddha. According to Lakshmi tantra (II. 55) all the Vibhava avatars are said to have emanated from Aniruddha.

All the twenty three avatars spoken of in the Bhagavata Purana (I. 3) are included in the above list of 39.

In the Narayaniya section of the Mahabharata Vihangama or Hamsa, Kamatesvara or Kurma, Ekasringatanu or Matsya, Varaha, Nrisimha, Vamana, Parasurama, Rama, Vedavid and Kalkin are mentioned as the ten avatars. The Sattvata samhita says (Chap. IX and XII) that all the Vibhava avatars are to be regarded as 'LILAVATARAS'.

Visvaksena samhita points out that avatars are not confined to human and animal forms only. Even the crooked mango tree in the Dandakaranya forest is said to be an instance of Incarnation.

The same samhita then mentions elaborately how even an inanimate object such as an image of Krishna, Nrisimha or Garuda becomes an avatar of Vishnu endowed with miraculous powers if only consecrated according to the Pancaratra rites. Owing to His Omnipotence Vishnu can descend into such images with a portion of His Sakti. This is exactly Arcavatara that is explained elaborately in most of the samhitas, as also in Yatindramata dipika and Tattvatraya and which will be discussed a little later in this thesis. Visvaksena samhita like the Ahirbudhnya makes a distinction between Primary Avatars and Secondary Avatars -

'Vibhavopi tathananto dvidhaiva parikirtyate'
'Gauna-Mukhya vibhagena sastreshu ca Harer mune'

Vibhava is simply the Lord's appearance in the likeness of some other being - These Vibhava avatars are broadly divided into two categories : - Pradur-bhavo dvidha prokto gauna-mukhya - vibhedatah -

I.Primary Avatars : Also called Sakshadavatara - Mukhya or Sresht(h)a avatars - Primary avatars are like a flame lighting another flame - i.e. : Vishnu Himself with a transcendent aprākrita body as the ultimate source - It is the incarnation in which the Lord acts directly in His own person (Sakshad). The Mukhya, Sreshta or Sakshad avatars are of the nature of the 'Divya Mangala Vigraha' of God Himself in no way falling short of His original nature and being, of His 'Naija Svabhava'. In other words they are considered to be in no way even slightly different from the Lord's Para-svarupa. These are Primary forms of Incarnation (Sakshad) that are directly derived from the Lord (from a part of the Lord) just as a lamp is lit from another lighted lamp and thus are considered to be transcendent forms, non-mundane forms. That is why these are very highly commended for worship by the Mumukshus, the seekers of salvation in the Visvaksena Sam.

'Prādurbhāvāstu mukhya ye madamsatvād visesatah'

'Ajohat - Sarvabhāvā Vibhavā Divyāprakrita Vigrahah'

'Dipad dipaivotpannā jagato rakshanayate'

'Mukhyā upāsyāḥ senesa anarcyām itarān viduh'. Tattvatraya.

II. Secondary Avatars : These are called Avesa avatars - Avara - Gouna or Asresht(h)a avatars - In Avesa avatar it is not God, the primary being Himself that is outright the incarnation. In these secondary incarnations God is said to have incarnated in inferior beings (all others are definitely inferior to Him) and causally inspired them. In other words Avesa avatars are after all souls in bondage with natural bodies of their own animated, inspired (avishta), pervaded by the power (sakti) of Vishnu for the realisation of particular objectives, for the fulfilment of specified purposes. These are not the original transcendent forms of God, but just manifest divine functions through the will of God.

'Madicchaya hi gaunatvam manushyatvam ivecchayā - - -

Aprakritvisva - sādhārana- vigrahena sahanāgatam - - - -

Gaunasya manushyatvadivad aprakrita-diva-samsthanam

Itara jatiyam kritva avatara - rupatvā-bhāvāt svarupena

Nā-gatam iti siddham - Tattvatraya-

They are just secondary avatars produced by the will of God, the Supreme Vishnu, produced in the forms-

i. of human beings such as Rama, Krishna,

ii. of animals such as the fish, the boar, (Matsyavatara Varahavatara)

iii. of the combined form as 'Man-lion' - (Narasimha).

iv. even as a tree in the form of the crooked mango tree in Dandakaranya etc.,

These causal inspirations - Avesa Avatars, the Secondary Avatars are further sub-divided into two classes:

1. Svarupavesa Avatars,
2. Saktyavesa Avatars.

Svarupavesa Avatars : These are Avataras in which God with His asadharana Mangalavigraha in spirits, animates the bodies of embodied souls like those of Parasurama and others. He actually permeates and enlivens with His own Divine body.

Saktyavesa Avatars : As and when certain major cosmic functions such as Srishti (creation) and Samhara (destruction) are to be undertaken God enlivens the souls like those of Brahma and Rudra with His own Sakti, actuates, inspires and animates the souls of the major deities shining therein.

Finding access through the bodies of finite souls with the Divine body, with the Lord's proper (i.e. all-transcendent) body is Svarupavesa Avatara.

Finding access with the Divine Power alone (not with the body), manifestation of Divine power (Sakti) alone in finite souls such as those of Lotus-born, his son Siva etc., during the times of their activity is Saktyavesa Avatara. In short it is just occasional Delegation of Power. It is injection of certain special powers on special occasions.

In many samhitas and particularly in Visvaksena samhita only primary incarnations, the Sakshadavataras are recommended for worship by the Mumukshus, the salvation seekers for the following reasons:

i. All primary incarnations are the actual transfigurations of the Lord's proper all-transcendent form. They are in fact considered identical with the Lord's all-transcendental form, His Para-Svarupa.

ii. They retain in themselves all the excellences of their original celestial nature.

iii. Like a light - lit - light, a flame kindled from another flame they shine with the same splendour and brightness as their original.

On the other hand the secondary incarnations, the Avesa Avatars are declared as non-worshipable for the Mumukshus, the seekers of liberation. They are recommended by the Visvaksena samhita on the other hand for the Bubhukshus (seekers of self-enjoyment either here, on earth or in the hereafter).

The Secondary Incarnations - Avesa avatars are enumerated as follows in the Samhita :

i. BRAHMA - the lotus-born - the evolving agent assigned for Srishti - Cosmic creation.

ii. AGNI and RUDRA with the assignment of Samhara - The dissolving agents Siva and Pavaka, the regent of fire.

iii. VYASA - The compiler of the Vedas after classifying them and marking them off into the famous FOUR.

iv. PARASURAMA son of Jamadagni with the assignment of wiping out the wicked kshatriyas.

v. KARTAVIRYARJUNA - the celebrated champion of the good and the innocent whom even Kalidasa praises in his Raghuvamsa.

'Akārya -cintā - sama - kāla eva pra, prādur - bhavams chāpa - dhārah parastāt .

Antas-sarireshvapi yah praprajānām,

Pratyādidesāvinayam vineta -

The Ruler, the moment any soul aimed at foul play, would appear before that soul fully armed and nip in the bud even the mental deviation from fairplay -

vi. KUBERA also called VITTESA - the regent of wealth celebrated for his munificence and famed as Dhana-da:

vii. BUDDHA, KAKUTHSA, MUCUKUNDA, PRUTHU, ARJUNA, ADI-BHARATA etc. etc.

Visvaksena samhita it may be remembered declares even Dattatreya an Avesa avatar only. Some other samhitas include in the prohibited list for Mumukshus even Rama, Atreya and Kapila. According to Visvaksena samhita, though God manifests Himself through the medium of finite souls for certain set purposes and the realisation of certain ends in the Avesa avatars, since the medium of finite souls is not absolutely divine as the individual souls which God inspires have still the pride of self-will in themselves, ahamkara, the Avesa avatars, the secondary incarnations are not worthy of worship by those who are after the one and the only goal of Salvation.

Though it is admitted in the Pancaratras that the source of all the avatars is the Vyuha Aniruddha, it is also stated that some of the derivative avatars are themselves the origins of some other ancillary avatars. Such avatars from avatars are called Vibhavantaras or Avatarantaras. For instance, Upendravatara is a Vibhavantara avatara. He is descended from Aniruddha for the protection of the world and also as a companion to Devendra. From this Upendravatara is once again derived Trivikramavatara. Trivikramavatara came to be to measure all the regions of the Universe with His strides and restore them back to Indra who had lost the riches of the three worlds (Trailokya sampath). Again from the same Upendravatara has emerged the avatara of Dadhibhakta. It is an avatarantara to bestow on Indra the elixir of immunity from old age and death (ajaramaratva).

So also Matsyavatara derived from Krishnavatar which is itself a derivative from Vyuha Aniruddha is an instance of Vibhavaantara to retain the entire Universe in its entrails during the cosmic deluge and thus keep it safe from harm or loss. Again from this very Avatarantara itself has emanated the Hayagriva avatara to instruct Caturmukha Brahma the four vedas.

Similarly the Nara Narayana avatars are drawn from the twelfth avatara Dharma, to destroy the demon Sahasrakavaci and to publish for mankind the Ashtakshara Brahmavidya. The Pancaratra samhitas say that even the Avatars Hari, Kurma, Kalki and Narasimha are avataranταras only.

In almost all the puranas mention is made of the Ten Avatars of Vishnu under the caption of 'Dasavatara" -

"Matsyah Kurmo Varahasca Narasimhotha Vamanah"

"Ramo Ramasca Krishnasca Bouddhah Kalkirathaivaca"

God's incarnation as fish, MATSYA :

It is said that Vishnu incarnated as fish just to resurrect the Vedas for the world of mankind.

Reference is made to the fish incarnation in the Satapatha Brahmana 1-8-12, 10-

' Matsyah pāni āpêde, sahasmaivā ca

Muvada bi bhruhi mā pārayishyāmi

Tveti Kasmā nmāpārayishya sīti chougha

Imā sarvāh prajā nirvodhāstatastvā

Pārayitāsmīti katham te mrutyuriti'

Once Manuchakravarti standing on a river bank took a handful of water from the river. There was found by chance a young fish in that water in his hands. Manu became very thoughtful indeed. Addressing Manu the young fish began to talk - 'manu, nurture me; I will protect you'. Very much perplexed Manu querried 'How do you protect me and from what or whom? ' The young fish replied 'as you will be seeing, all men become drowned in the floods. At that time I will protect you from the great deluge'. How Manu nursed that fish in the stream, how it went on growing and how he finally carried it to the ocean is all mentioned in the Satapatha. How the Vedas were saved for mankind by the fish incarnation of Lord Vishnu is also averred to.

God's incarnation as Tortoise, KURMA :

It is said that Vishnu incarnated as Tortoise, assumed the Kurma form just to sustain on His back the Mandaragiri, help in the churning of the ocean, Samudra Manthana, and the production of Ambrosia, Amrita.

In Taittiriya Aranyaka 1-23-3, it is stated -

'Antaratah Kurmabhuta paryantam tamabravīt

Mamavai tva jnāmsātsmabhūnnetyabravīt

Pūrvamevāhamihāsamititatpurushasya

Pūrushatvam sahasraśīrshā

Pūrushaḥ sahasrākshah sahasrapāt bhutvodatishtahta'

Sayana while explaining the above aranyaka vakya says :

' Sarvagata nitya caitanya svarūpatvāt sah Kūrmasarīravartī Paramātmā

Prajapati's (Brahma's) perspiration streamed out of his body, fell into water, assumed the shape of a tortoise and began to move hither and thither. Brahma said - 'You tortoise, you are born of my "Tvajnamsa" '- The tortoise replied - 'No, I have been even before you'. From this the vyutpatti has come to Kurma as 'Purusha' - "Purah tishtahtiti Purushah' - 'This Kurmarupa Purusha is Himself Prajapati'.- so saying the Kurma assumed the 'Virātrupa-Sahasrasirsha Sahasraksha Sahasrapat'-

In Satapatha also – 'Sayatkurmo nama etadvairupam kritva Prajāpatih prajā asrijata' - 7.5.1.9 - With the well known form of Kurma, Prajapati procreated creation.

God's incarnation as Boar, VARAHA :

Vishnu incarnated as a Boar, assumed the form of Varaha just to uplift the earth that was submerged and restore it to its present position.

'Apovā idamagre salilamāsīt

Tasmin Prajapatirvāyurbhutvā caratsa

Imāmapasyat tam Varaho bhutvā aharat' - Taittiriya Samhita 7-1-5-1.

'Sa varāho rupam kritvopanyamajjata

Sa prithivīmadha ārchata' - Taittiriya Aranyaka 1-1-6.

Itīyatī havā iyamagre prithivyā

Sa prādeśamātritamemūsha iti varāha

'Ujjaghāna so'syāh patiriri' Satapatha 14-1-2-11.

First of all there was water alone. Prajapati circulating through it in the form of Vayu saw this Prithivi. Then He assumed the form of the Boar and brought up the Prithivi.

Prajapati assumed the form of Varaha, dived underneath and saw this prithivi -

First of all this big Prithivi was only Pradesa matra. He (Prajapati) resurrected it by assuming the form of Varaha.

In Rigveda, Prathama mandala, 18th sukta it is stated - 'Mahi-vratah sucibandhuh pāvakah padāvarāho abhyetirebhan' - He who preserves the codes of protecting the earth, He who is the most sacred (Paramapavitra murti), Jagadbandhu, Parama - parihāraka Varāhamurti - moves about giving out a loud note.

God's incarnation as NARASIMHA –Man-lion:

Vishnu assumed the form a man-lion just to protect and preserve Prahlada, one of the greatest devotees.

'Vajranakhaya vidmahe tīkshna damshtrāya dhīmahi

Tanno Narasimhah pracōdayāt' - Taittiriya Aranyaka.

God's incarnation as VAMANA, a midget:

Vishnu assumed the Vamana form just to humble down Bali Chakravarti and punish him thereby saving his soul.

'Idam Vishnurvicakrame tredhā nidadhe padam

Samulahamasya pāmsure' - Rik. 1-22-17.

'Vāmanoha Vishnurasit' - Satapatha.

Vishnu in Vamana form with His three strides encompassed the whole Universe. In His one step alone the entire Universe including the earth is encompassed.

'Vishnu Himself has assumed the Vamana form' -

In the Puranas Vamana is referred to obviously in the context of Balidamana.

God's incarnation as PARASURAMA :

Vishnu incarnated as Parasurama just to humiliate and quell the arrogant kshatriyas - 'Provaca Ramo Bhargaveyo visvantaraya' - Aitareya Brah.

God's incarnation as SRI RAMA :

Vishnu incarnated as Sri Rama and was born on this earth to give succour to the Saranagata, destroy the wicked and uphold Dharma.

God's incarnation as SRI KRISHNA :

Vishnu incarnated as Sri Krishna to assume the role of Gitacharya and instruct mankind on Moksha - liberation.

'Narayanaya vidmahe Vasudevaya dhimahi'

Tanno Vishnuh pracodayat - Taittiriya Aranyaka.

God's incarnation as BUDDHA :

Vishnu is said to have incarnated on earth as Lord Buddha for deluding the wicked - (asura mohanartha).

God's incarnation as KALKI :

Vishnu is said to have incarnated once again as Kalki, to provide salvation for all mankind by scorching out outright unrighteousness on this earth.

Thus, the ten well-known and oft quoted avatars of Vishnu as delineated in the Puranas also.

The question is often raised - 'What exactly is the reason for the Supreme God to incarnate, to assume a birth like any other ordinary moral?

The answer is it is the Lord's sovereign will alone and none else that is the reason for His descent, His AVATARA into any form, human, animal or even plant-like. It is His Sovereign Will alone and not any Karma as in the case of men that is the cause of the Lord becoming incarnate. God cannot have and does not have any KARMA attached to Him. Otherwise He cannot be the Supreme Lord at all. To substantiate this there are many authorities:

'Though unborn, He often is born gloriously' - Purusha Sukta.

'Arjuna, I and You have passed through many births' - Gita IV-5.

'Through every kind of birth, thou hast O God of Gods, been pleased to pass' - Parankusa's Tiruvurattam.

'He who birth mysterious took in the human and all other forms' - Dramidopanishad III. v-6.

'I am born by virtue of my own free-will through Maya' Gita IV-6. (Maya here mean 'Thought' as per the veda nighantu or vedic lexicon - 'Maya (tu), vayunam jnanam'.

'Who of His own will assumes various bodies that are apt' - Vishnupurana VI. v. 84.

In Atimanusha stava also ample references are given to point out that GOD's own free-will is the cause of His AVATARS.

Then an objection may be raised - 'What about Bhrighu's curse, compelling the Lord to be born on earth ? - The answer is it is only a pretext and can never be the sole reason.

In Lingapurana II, it is stated - 'Sarvavarteshu vai Vishnor, Jnanam svechchhayaiva tu jarkastra -chchhalenaiva svechchhaya gamanam Hareh; dvija - s'apa - chchhalena - evam avatirnopi lilayā' -

In every age the Omnipresent is born by His own free-will alone. Jaraka's dart is but the pretext under which the Lord left the earth.

So also the Brahman's curse is but the pretext whence He, playful is born.

The possibilities of saints and sages sometimes taking liberties with the Lord - is explained away as due to Lord's indulgence in His favourite, the previleges granted by Him to His favourite devotees.

'Upacarah Kartavyo

Yāvad anutpanna - s auhrid āh purush āh

Utpanna - - Sauhrid ānām

Upacārah kaitavam bhavati'.

'Formality is fit till friendship is formed; Forms but offend, when friendship has been formed'

Even the Bhagavata text says: X. 32-22

'Evam madarthojjita- lokavedsvamam hi vo mayyanuvrittaye abalāh' -

The sages curse is only an apparent cause; Lord's sovereign will alone is the real cause of His Avatars.

The purpose of Lord's incarnation as Man etc., is three-fold as stated in the Gita text - IV. 8 -

'To save the good, to smite the bad, to uphold the law, I am born from age to age'.-

Thus the three reasons for the Lord's incarnation by His Own absolute free-will are :

i. Sāttvikajana Samrakshana - Protecting the upright and the honest,

ii. Dushta Nigraha - Destruction of the wicked,

iii. Displaying the righteous path of worship by presenting Himself as the object of worship and adoration.

God the Almighty is absolutely 'Akarmavasya' - There is no other compelling power to make Him descend to this earth or any where or to condescend on mankind except His own FREE WILL.

Then an other objection may be raised as follows:

If God Srimannarayana is Sarvesvara, the Overlord, Sarvajna, the Omniscient, Sarvasakta, the Omnipotent, Sarvantaryami, the Omnipresent, Akhilaheya pratyanika, the person opposed to all the wrongs, Sakala kalyana gunakara, Satyakama, Satyasamkalpa, Niratisayanandamaya, Akhilanda-koti Brahmanda nayaka and the ordainer of Srishti, Sthiti and Laya of the entire Universe, why should HE after all have recourse to AVATARS to set right the wrongs and steer aright the course of Dharma ? Why should He behave like ordinary mortals, suffer like ordinary beings having assumed the *AVATARA* forms ? Is it not unbecoming of GOD the GREAT ? Can we after all surmise that the so-called pleasant or painful experiences of the Lord in His Avatara forms are all illusory and unreal in the last resort ? The answer once again is 'NO' - It is categorically stated that God's experiences (in His Avatara forms) such as :

1. Sarira vyadhi - bodily ailments
2. Manasa chinte - mental agonies
3. Daridrya and Runabhada - poverty and indebtedness
4. Smaravasyate - loss of memory
5. Manoratha bhanga -
6. Bandhuniryana duhkha

7. Samkalpa Vaiphalya -
8. Mischief and foul play by Devatas
9. Foul play by relatives -
10. Submission to planetary positions and the influence of the stars -
11. Janana - Marana Kala niyati vasyate - etc. etc. are all real.

The Avatara rahasya is mysterious indeed ! God in His avatara role truly goes through every one of the sufferings possible for mankind just to provide solace to the suffering many. If we just scan through the experiences of the Lord in His Rama avatara and Krishna avatara we feel aghast. In each avatara according to the times and the circumstances God has acted His role perfectly well with the obvious two ends in view :

i. Dushta Nigraha - Destruction of the wicked,
ii. Sishta Paripalana - Protection of the good.

God Himself in the avatara of Krishna has declared :

'Yada yada hi dharmasya glanirbhavati Bharata,
Abhyuthanam adharmasya tadatmanam srujami aham.'

Time is always ripe for God's descension (avatara) when Dharma is at the lowest ebb and adharma is in the ascendency. He incarnates to resuscitate Dharma and scotch out Adharma.

The doubt still remains - 'Why should Almighty the God take all the trouble of an avatara to set right the course of the Universe when He can after all just WILL it to be allright and do nothing else ? '

The answer given by the Alwars and the Acharyas is just this:

By Samkalpamatra, by His will alone God can ofcourse bring about 'Dushta nigraha' - the destruction of the evil. But it is argued out that by His sheer Will He cannot bring about 'Sattvikajana samrakshana' and 'Dharma sthapana' - protection of the good and re-establishment of Dharma.

Sattvikajana saṁrakshana implies two factors:

i. Protection of the good first of all implies removal of their Anishta.

ii. Secondly it implies granting them their 'Ishta'.

The Sattvikas are those who are deeply immersed in God and who always pine for God's presence. They aspire to see God actually and witness His marvellous deeds. The Parama vaishnavas want to have a dialogue with God, converse with Him and communicate with Him. Without having recourse to avataras God cannot provide opportunities for Darshana, Sparshana and Sallapa to His devotees. Hence the compelling necessity for the avataras of VISHNU. By coming down to men and living in their midst, He cannot only re-establish Dharma, He can also please them by His veritable loving presence.

Thus the VIBHAVA Svarupa of God is none other than His avataras in the form of Rama, Krishna etc. These descensions God makes as and when necessary just to execute the decisions He will have taken at His abode Kshirabdhi, the Supreme court of Divine Justice. God never permits injustice to prosper or justice to suffer.

'Paritranaya ca Sadhunam vinasaya ca duskrutam,
Dharmasamsthapanarthaya Sambhavami yuge yuge'.

GOD's promise is never to let down the good or let off the wicked. To the loving devotee God always extends His hand of help, Abhaya. He undertakes the ordeal of an avatar too, a descension just to provide succour and solace to His loving devotees wherever they may be. He is even prepared to suffer with them just to save them. That is GOD. Hence the VIBHAVA role is often periodically necessary.

GOD AS ANTARYAMIN

ANATARYAMITVA means the Lord being imminent in all and controlling all - 'Ya atmanam antaro yamayati' - says the. Brihadaranyaka Upanishad.

The highest BRAHMAN, the first cause and the source of all, who is free from all shadows even of imperfection, resolved to be many - ' So' akamayata, bahusyam prajayayeti' - Thereupon He sent forth the entire Universe consisting of fire, water, etc., Into this Universe so sent forth He introduced the mass of individual souls into different bodies, divine, human, etc. corresponding to the merit of each soul. The souls thus became the Selfs of the bodies. Finally Brahman Himself entered into these souls according to His wish and thereby He constituted their Inner Self (ANTARYAMIN). He thus then being the Inner SELF of all selves, evolved in all these aggregates names and forms. In other words He rendered each aggregate as something substantial - as a VASTU that could be easily denoted by a word.

"Let me enter into these beings with this LIVING SELF" (JIVENA ATMANA) - meaning thereby 'With this living Me'. This LIVING SELF in all selves is BRAHMAN Himself. It means each individual has Brahman Himself for its Self. Having Brahman Himself for its self means Brahman is the Inner Self of the Soul (the Self inside the Soul, not identical with the Soul). This is referred to by the Scriptures by declaring that 'Brahman entered into it' as is clearly stated in the Taittiriya passage II. 6.1.-

'Idam sarvam asrijata, yad idam kim ca, tat srishtva tadevanupravisat, tadanupravisya sacca tyacca abhavat - Iti atra idam sarvam iti nirdishtam. Cetanacetana vastudvayam satyacchabdabhyam vijnanavijnana sabdabhyam ca vibhajya

nirdisya cidvastunyapi Brahmano-nu pravesabhidhanat I. Ata evam namarupavyakaravatsarve vacakassabda acijjiva visishta paramatmavacina ityavagatam - iti'.

"He sent forth all this, whatever there is; (He created all this). Having created all this He entered into it. Having entered into it, He became Sat and Tyat - 'All this' clearly means all beings intelligent, as well as non-intelligent which are later distinguished as 'SAT' and 'TYAT', as knowledge (Vijnana) and non-knowledge.

Brahman is thus said to have entered into intelligent beings also.

Chandogypa Upanishad VI.8.7. also pointedly refers to Antaryamitva by the words -

'Etadatmyamidam sarvam iti' -

'All this has its SELF in THAT'

Brahman is the self with regard to the whole Universe of matter and souls. This universe of Matter and Souls inclusive of the intelligent souls is *the Body of Brahman* -'

'Cetana misram prapancam idam sarvam iti nirdisya tasmaisha atmeti pratipaditam - Evam ca sarva cetanachetanam prati Brahmana atmatvena sarvam sacetanam jagat tasya sariram bhavati' -

In the Taittiriya Aranyaka - III. 24 it is stated:

'Antah pravishtascāstā janānām sarvātmā -

'He who has entered within, the Ruler of beings, the Self of all' - Thus He is the Antaryami of all -

In Vishnu Purana I. XVII.20 it is said :

'Sāstā Vishnur aseshasya jagato to hridisthitah'-

The Omnipresent ruler of all souls, seated in their hearts' -

The Brihadaranyaka upanishad having stated in its seventh Brahmana - III.7 -

'Yah prithivyam tishtam prithivyam antaro yam prithivi naveda, yasya prithivi sariram yah prithivimantaro yamayati sa, ta, atma antaryamamrutah' -

It then continues to state -

'Ya atmani tishtan atmanoantaro yamatma naveda Yasyatma sariram ya atma na mantaro yamayati sa ta atma antaryamamrutah' - ityadi,

'He who dwelling in the earth, is within the earth and whose body is the earth - He is the Antaryamin. He who is dwelling within the Self, but whom the Self itself does not know, He of whom the Self is the body, who rules the self from within, He *is thy real Self.* He is thy Ruler within, the immortal, the Antaryamin' -

In Subala upanishad VII. 1. it is said:

'Yah prithivim antare sancaran , yasya prithivi sancaran, yo apamantare sancaran yasyapasariram - - - Yo aksharamantare sancaran asyaksharam sariram, yamaksharam naveda esha sarvabhutantaratma apahata pampa divyodeva eko Narayanah' -

'He who moves within the earth, of whom the earth is the body - - - who moves with in the imperishable, of whom the imperishable is the body but whom the imperishable does not know - He the inward Ruler of all beings free from Evil, the Divine, the *one God Narayana.*

All these clearly point out that the world inclusive of all *intelligent souls* is the body of the Highest Self, and this HIGHEST SELF, the Para Brahma is Himself the SELF of everything.' -

The Sri Bhasya says - Iti sarvatattvanam paramatva sariratvam spashtam' - that the entire Universe and all the Tattvas constitute the body, the Sarira of ISVARA.

The Subala upanishad states quite directly that all beings constitute the body, the Sarira of the Highest self - 'He of whom

the earth is the body, of whom water is the body, of whom fire is the body, of whom wind is the body, of whom ether is the body, of whom death is the body, He the Inner Self of all, the Divine one, the One God NARAYANA.

'Sa eva sarva - bhutantaratmapahatapampa divyo deva eko Narayanah ' - (VII.1) He alone, Narayana alone is the indwelling spirit of all beings. He is free from all evil; He is the one Divine, the radiant NARAYANA - The Upanishad continues to say that this Vidya was first imparted to Apantaratmas. Apantaratmas imparted it to Brahmā. Brahma imparted it to Ghoras angiras Ghora Angiras imparted it Raikva. Raikva imparted it to Rama and Rama imparted it to all beings. It emphasises that this is the doctrine that leads to liberation. It also acclaims that this doctrine of the Antaryamitva of GOD is the doctrine of the Veda - Vedanusasanam iti, Vedanusasanam -

The Jayakhya samhita while discoursing on pure creation as the third creation (Suddha sarga) points out that God otherwise known as Vasudeva evolves out of Himself three subsidiary agents, namely :

a) Achyuta,

b) Satya,

c) Purusha.

The Samhita simultaneously points out that these three subsidiary agents have no independent existence, but that they are in reality one with God. The samhita points out that God as Purusha is the Antaryamin. God as Purusha conducts Himself as the Inner Controller of all human beings and even of all other minor deities. He dwells in the Selves even of the Gods, the ordinary Gods, counsels and goads them, and finally leads them to do their assignments - It is as Purusha that God works in all human beings bound by the ties or bonds of Vasana and works in such a way that finally He leads them to the cessation of their bondage within themselves and to the awareness of the pure consciousness in themselves and to their identity with BRAHMAN.

God is Pure Bliss and Self-Consciousness in Himself. - Satchidananda - He is the Ultimate Reality and the Apex of all existences. Though everything is self-existent, God is the supporter of all existences. God has neither a beginning nor an end and He is INFINITE. He cannot therefore be designated either as existent or non-existent. (Sva Sat tan nassad uchyate). Though God is devoid of all Gunas, He is the Centre of all Gunas and enjoys the various products of the Gunas - He exists both inside of us and also outside of us. He pervades everything of the Universe and yet called Non-existent because He cannot be perceived by the senses. God is all perceiving and Omniscient. - He is the Lord of all He surveys and all existences are in Him. In Himself He combines all energies. - He is ever alert and spontaneous in Himself. All activities originate from Him and depend on Him. He is the Prime Mover and the Unmoved Mover - He is *like the fragrance of flowers*, all over, everywhere and yet nowhere. He can be directly intuited like the fragrance of the flowers thougth He cannot be perceived as such. - God can be felt and intuited, experienced directly.

'Sva Samvedyam Tu Tad Viddhi Gandhah,

Pushpadiko Yatha' Jayakhya - IV-76.

God is limited neither by Time nor by Space. All things are included in Him. God permeates all existences in the same way as fire exists in a red-hot iron ball, pervades in all as if it were one therewith.

Just as an object reflected in a mirror, in one sense exists inside the mirror and in another sense is outside the mirror so also God in one sense is associated with all the Sense Qualia and in another sense He is unassociated. - God is said to pervade the whole world, all the Conscious and the Unconscious entities of the Universe just as the watery juice pervades the whole of the plant -

'Cetanā - Cetanāh Sarve Bhutah Sthāvara - Jangamāh,

Pūritāh Parameśena Rasenaushadhayo Yathā' - Jayakhya IV. 93.

Discursive Reasoning cannot apprehend God. God is *unapproachable* for arguments and beyond all proof. Just as fire in wood or butter in milk pervades it in entirety but yet cannot be perceived as such in them ordinarily so also God's all-pervading existence is both unspeakable and undemonstrable. God's existence can only be intuited says the Jayakhya, can be intuited only directly.

Just as logs of wood enter fire, and are consumed and lost as wood, just as rivers enter the ocean, become one with it and lose their individually in the waters of the ocean so also yogins by intuition enter into the essence of God and get merged in Sachidananada - the Jayakhya Samhita says though there is the difference between the rivers as such and the ocean into which they enter, the difference cannot be perceived.

'Sarit - Samgād Yatha Toyam Sampravishtam Mahodadhau-

Alakshyas'co'dake Bhedah Parasmin Yoginam Tatha.' Jaya. sam. IV. 123.

There is difference, there is absence of difference, between waters of the rivers and those of the ocean. In the same way there is and there is not difference between the devotees of God, and God. - BHEDA-ABHEDA - Unity in difference.

Brahman is described as identical with Consciousness and all objects of knowledge are considered as existing inside the mind -

Brahma - Bhinnam Vibhor Jnanam

Srotum Icchami Tattvatah,

Yena Samprapyate Jneyam Antahkaranasamasthitam'

- Jaya. IV. 1.

True knowledge can arise only through yogic practice, only by those who by practice can reach union with God. True knowledge is unassociated with any qualifications -

'Sarvo - Padhi - Vinirmuktam Jnanam Ekanta - Nirmalam,

Utpadyate Hi Yuktasya Yogabhyasat Kramena Tat'.

Antaryamitva of God is the 'Yogidhyeya Svarupa' of God established eternally in the lotus of the heart of every cetana, as the soul's friend and benefactor, ever counselling him (the individual soul) on righteous lines. God is established in the heart of every individual soul *thereby* bestowing on each soul its 'Svarupa Satta' - its individuality and constitution. It is responsible primarily to all its propensities and inhibitions, Pravritti and Nivritti. Elders like Acharyas consider that this Antaryamitva is of two types in each and every soul :

i. Svarupa - matra vyapti,

ii. Divyamangalavigrahavisishtasvarupa vyapti.

I. SVARUPA - MATRA VYAPTI :

This is Antaryamitva or Divine Pervasiveness. This is Universal divine permeation or imminence in all living and non-living existences (Cetana and Acetana) in the subtlest form (as is well expressed in the phrase - anoraniyan). It is the simple divine sustaining force in every one of the things of the world animate or inanimate, thinking or non-thinking- the Sukshamatara antaratma, that determines the very being of a thing. God as Antaryami is invariably an inseparably imminent in all the souls and He is with them in all their migrations too whether to a Heaven or a Hell or even to the womb of a mother, in all diverse situations and circumstances. God is the constant companion of every individual soul as its Antaryamin. The individual souls have the full freedom to do evil, earn demerit and go to hell; they have the equal freedom to do the good, earn merit and reach Heaven to enjoy there. God by His very imminence is the constant companion of the soul whether in Heaven or Hell watching Him. The individual as such may not be aware of His presence and Company. God is all patience and sticks to him as his true friend and relative. By the very constitution of the Soul God cannot be away from Him - He is the Soul's inseparable companion. That is the basic aspect of Antaryamitva, its Cardinal note. As the Visvaksena samhita says :

'Antaryami svarupam ca sarvesham bandhuvat sthitam' -

The all imminent essence (Divine) is like a Universal friend.

'Svarga - Naraka Pravese pi bandhuratma hi Kesavah'-
ımaraka

Like true mothers going incognito in the darkness of the ht to their perversely straying children and make them accept :n unknown to themselves boons which they (the errant ldren) would not knowingly receive (from their mother's ıds) God as Antaryamin safeguards the truant souls even in ir misadventures and affectionately cherishes them always l under all conditions. Brihad. Up. II. vii.22.

VIGRAHA - VISISHTA VYAPTI :

The Lord elevated in His all transcendent form, is imminent the heart of embodied souls for the purpose of enabling them contemplate Him and be saved -

In the Katha upanishad it is stated:

"Of the size of his thumb amid each meditator's frame,

The Lord of all things - Past and Future, dwells like ıokeless flame -

The meditator's heart despite its grossness, He doesn't athe-

Whatever is or shall be, He pervades -

Blest is each soul that HIM knoweth" -

The Taittiriya upanishad also says :

'Like lightning flash overlapping a blue cloud -

Bright radiance here surrounds (the sky-hued Lord)

('Nila-toyada - madhyastha; Vidyullekheva Bhasvara).

God residing in the lotus-like hearts of all the embodied ›uls, is quite intimate with every one of them. Whenever the nbodied souls feel a taste for God's contemplation, God nmediately provides them food for contemplation and thus rotects them by controlling their intellects-Thus as a true friend

and a close kinsman in the lotus-like heart of every soul, God the transcendent seated in an amiable form provides succour to every soul craving for His meditation. As the 'Ayana' of all the 'naras, God feels close affinity with the individual souls and helps them by being in them-What a merciful God-That is His ANTARYAMITVA - As Antaryami residing in the heart of hearts of every soul, He reminds the good souls of His presence and helps them to meditate on HIM.

THE ARCAVATARA

THE BEST manifestation of God for the benefit of man is considered to be the ARCAVATARA - descension into worshipful forms, into the visible and tangible forms of idols or images in temples and homes. The term 'Arca' is Pratimavacaka. The true devotees of God having prepared an idol as per their desire in gold, silver, brass, copper, bronze or other metals, or even of stone or earth, install it according to the Sastras invoking God's presence in it with the greatest devotional prayers. God's presence, Bhagavatsannidhya is actually brought about therein. God is actually tied up by the ropes of Bhakti and established in the idol with ceremonies. As Nammalvar (Shadagopan) acclaims - 'Valatti vetten, ini pohalotten' - 'I have encircled you with the ropes of my Bhakti and established you in the idol; I won't allow you to go' - It is true God the Almighty, Sriyahpati is Sarvasakta - (all powerful); yet He has another great quality, Mahaguna namely 'Aśrita Pāratantrya' He cannot extricate Himself from that bandhana of devotion, from the bonds of love and affection for those who seek shelter in Him, love and adore Him. He is so to say actually enticed into the Pratima and thereafter He makes the Pratima itself His abode of living. In other words He creates 'Sannidhya' there with His 'Aprakrita Divya Mangala Vigraha' -

Pillai Lokacharya in his 'Tattva Traya' writes about Arcavatara in the following terms :

200. "Arcavataramavadu - Tamaroganda devvuruvam avvuruvam" engirupadiye cetanarakku abhimatamāna-dravyangalile vibhavavisesangalpolanrikke desakaladhi-kariniyamamilladapadi sannidhipanni aparadhangalai kkanakkannittu arcaka Paratantramana samasta Vyaparangale-yumudaiyanaykondum Koyilkalilum Grihangalilum ezhundaruli nirkum nilai".

201. "Rucitajanaktvamum subhasrayatvamum aseshaloka-saranyatvamum anubhavyatvamum cllām arcavatarattile Paripurnam".

202. "Svasvamibhavattai maradikkondu ajnaraippoleyum asaktaraippoleyum asvatantraraippoleyum irakkaccaideyum aparakarunyaparavasanaikkondu sarvapekshitangalaiyum koduttarulum".

Poigai Alvar in 'Modal Tiruvandadi' - 44 - says:

'Tamarugandatevvuruvam avvuruvam tane'.

What type of body the devotees,-the believers want Him to assume, He (the God) assumes that form.

'Whatever the form His devotees choose, He of that form becomes' - according to this text God waives away all His self-imposed sanctions such as 'Dravyaniyama' (He enters any idol whether made of earth, stone gold or silver etc.),'Desaniyama' (He presents Himself anywhere and does not adhere to any of His own choice such as Ayodhya or Madhura), 'Kalaniyama' (He does not bide His own time; rather He appears whenever called for) or any 'Adhikariniyama' (He does not bother to be born of any particular parents of His own choosing such as Dasaratha and Kousalya or Vasudeva and Devaki; He does not stipulate His incarnation for any particular persons). He rather manifests Himself to all in temples and in their individual homes even (Uyarnile - Kovil alwar).

He forgives the innumerable faults of His worshippers as also any lapses on the part of the accredited arcakas too. In fact He becomes absolutely dependent on the arcakas and the worshippers. Most patiently He puts up with all the lapses on the part of His devotees with His abundant mercy and forbearance.

'Arcaka Paradhina khila atma sthitih'-

Arcaka Paratantra - Even for food, sayana and asana, sleeping and taking rest He depends on the worshipper.

Arca sabda is pratima vaci - its 'Nighantu' is:

'Arca puja pratimayoh' -

Bhauma - niketaneshvapi kutikunjeshu -

'Sarva - sahishnuh' -

God resides in every home in an idol or even in a picture if only properly invoked and worshipped with all devotion. He is all-forgiving with His calm endurance of His devotees with all their moral slips and careless deviations.

Parasara Bhattar has dealt with arca vaibhava very beautifully in His 'Sri Ranga Raja stava 2-73' -

The prominent characteristics of Arcavatara may be enumerated as follows :

1. There is a time limit, 'Kalaniyama' for every Vibhava-vatara. For instance 'Ramavatara' is said to have lasted for 11000 years whereas 'Krishnavatara' sthitikala is enumerated as only of the duration of 120 years. Arcavatara has no such time limit. It can for ever provide 'Bhagavat sannidhya'. As long as the devotee wants Him in the IDOL, He stays in it.

2. For Ramavatara Ayodhyanagara was required; for Krishnavatara Madhura was required. There was a specific 'Desaniyama' for each avatara. There is no such for 'arca'. It can be in every home if required and God provides Sannidhya in arca.

3. In Ramavatara God had to have Dasaratha as His father and had to receive obeisance from the 'Saketa nivasis'. In Krishnavatara He had to have Vasudeva for His father and receive 'Seva' from the denizens of GOKUL, Madhura and Dvaraka. There is no such stipulation for arca. Only the desire for God should be there. God is easily accessible for all the adhikaris.

4. In arcavatara the image of God can be made of any material. There is absolutely no 'VASTU' niyama. In fact the

images, the 'Devata Murtis' may be made of stone, wood, metal or even of sand or mud. They may be made of even Ratna, precious stones or they may just be paintings on a canvas -

'Sailee Darumayi Lauhi Lekhya Lepyaca saikati,

'Manomayi Manimayi pratimashta vidha smrutah' -

5. Arcavatara has the essential trait of 'Saulabhya-simabhumitvam' -

God the Sriyahpati is 'Sahanaseela' - He patiently puts up with all the foibles and drawbacks of His devotees, He leaves all His activities like 'Sayanasana, Snana, Bhojana, Gamana' etc., His 'Sakala Vyaparas' to His devotees and worshippers. He sleeps when asked to, dines when served with; every moment everyone of His activities He leaves it to His devotees. Thus God the Sarva Svatantra forgets all His 'Svatantrya' and becomes absolutely 'Paratantra'. He then helps His devotees to realise all their cherished desires. Hence 'Arca' is considered to be the most favourable ground for easy access and quick realisation. As God Himself resides as a guest in His devotees' home or temple, He has made himself extremely amiable and amenable (Saulabhya). Incidentally He is so loving, He completely ignores all the lapses (Sarvaparadhas) on the part of His devotees.

6. God in Arcavatara reveals the best beauty in the image. (Rupa-lavanya). He thereby arrests the attention of even the errant and erratic souls who have wandered away from God and disobeyed the injunctions of all the Sastras. Even the capricious and wayward souls get drawn towards the beauty in the image and begin to cultivate a taste for divinity and goodness.

'En amuthanai kkanda kangal mattonrivai kkanave',-

'My eyes have feasted on my Lord's heavenly beauty'.

They henceforth will not look at any other sight.

As pointed out in the Gita III. 33, even the injunctions of the Sastras fail to produce goodness and Godliness in the minds of

men. An average man does not normally follow the Sastrokta Vidhinishedhas. The masses (aprabuddhas), the unenlightened are so deeply immersed in their mundane affairs and beastly instincts that they turn their faces away from God. But when they see the beauty of God's form in an image or an idol they feel attracted to divinity. Thus the Arca idol weans the souls from wandering away and creates in them a taste for worship and love for God. The aesthetic element in an idol depicting the beauty of God gathers the souls towards it.

The ten stanzas of Tiruppani Alwar really reveal the beauty of God in the Ranganatha idol at Srirangam:

'Āpādacūda manubhūya Harimsayānam,
Madhyekareva duhituh muditantaratma
Adrashtatam nayanayorvishayantaranam
Yoniscikayamanavat munivahanantam'.

7. It is Arcavatara that provides a visible and tangible object for those who want to meditate of HIS SVARUPA. When a taste for worship and meditation has arisen in the minds and souls of the Bhaktas, it is obviously Arcavatara that provides an amiable image - Śubhāśraya - on which the worshipper's eyes and hearts can rest. It is only in Arcavatara and not in any of the rest of the four forms of God that Dhyana Soukarya, facility for easy meditation on the Svarupa of God is provided.

8. God in Arcavatara provides easy accessibility as saviour to all kinds of souls without any distinctions of high or low, caste or carrer or even of sex. 'Sarvaloka saranyatvam' is the dominant characteristic of Arcavatara. Whatever be their status or qualification whatever be their merit or otherwise, in spite of all their failings and foibles God provides succour for those who seek shelter in Arcavatara. If the devotees rely entirely on Arcavatara for the realisation of their desires, if they take up to Arca as the only recources and sadhana, God surely helps the seekers of shelter. God in Arca has the essential trait of 'Dosha-bhogyatva' - out of empathy for the souls in distress (let alone

the usual sympathy in the form of dosa-nirakaratvam). He cherishes the devotees with all their sins just as mother-cow licks off the clinging filth of her calf just born, in all affection. God absolves the devotees of all their sins and saves them once for all with His abundant mercy. He helps the denizens of all the 3 worlds to seek shelter in Him.

9. Arcavatara confers a great benefit on the devotees in the form of 'Niratisaya bhogyatva' - There is a stipulation that those who meditate on 'Antaryamisvarupa' can have 'Paripurna phala prapti' only after release from 'Samsara bandhana' and reaching 'Vaikunta'. In Arcavatara on the other hand even while one is entangled in the vortex of Samsara one can enjoy all the perfect gunas of the Lord as they reside in full in the Arcavatara pratima - It is categorically asserted that in Arca itself one can realise God and reach Parama Sayujya as illustrated prominently in the lives of Tiruppanar and Andal (10 sloka in Prabhanda Ratna). One need not wait for death of the body and the subsequent entry into Vaikuntha. God in all His glory can be immediately realised in Arcavatara.

10. In sage Saunaka's 'Sri Vishnu Dharma' chapt. 103, the three principle characteristics of the Lord in HIS ARCA form are set forth as follows:

i. The Lord's taking for His body, whatever material His devotees choose for the purpose -

ii. His becoming worshipable in such a body (i.e., in the idol which He incarnates) -

iii. The idol with the Lord's Sannidhya in it (the Arcavatara of God) itself becoming the destiny and the final goal of God-realisation,

'Svarupam Pratimam Vishnoh prasanna vadaneekshanam,
Kritvatmanah pritikarim suvarnarajatadibhih...
Tam arcayet, tam pranamet, tam bhajet, tam vicintayet,
Visaty apasta-doshas tu Tam eva Brahma-rupinim'-

Having a beautiful figure, having graceful eyes and a pretty mouth, the attractive and benign figure of God in the form of an idol made of gold or silver or of soame other material and installed according to the Sastras with the Almighty's presence invoked therein should be worshipped and meditated upon with all devotion and self-surrender. If a person does so continuously he will be purged of all the Karma bandhas at the final moment of discarding the mortal coil and ultimately he attains the very God whom He adores. He then gains 'Paripurna Brahmanandanubhava' as expatiated in the well-known verse:

Purnamadah Purnamidam
Purnat purnamudacyate
Purnasya purnamadaya
Purnamevavasishyate.

In other words we may say that Arcavatara is both Upasya and Prapya. It is not only for worship and meditation, it is also for ultimate approach and realisation.

11. In His Supreme state and original condition, in His PARAVASTHA, God is the Lord and the individual soul, the JIVA is His property. This status is outright reversed in Arcavatara. The same God in Arcavatara makes Himself of the property of the individual soul and is always associated with the Jiva.

'Svasvamibhavaviparyasenapi arcaya asritamanorathapurakatvam'-

Though appearing with the true relation of proprietor and property reversed.

The quality of being property is in the soul.

That of being proprietor is in the Lord - who is all souls' soul-

When this relation comes to be reversed-

And the Lord, thence is, as property possessed

Then with the liberty of Love divine
The devotee claims the Lord, saying 'Thou art mine'
Whereas as liege, he bows to Him saying ' I am thine'.

12. While God is Sarvajna, Sarvasakta, and Svatantra by Himself, in Arcavatara He behaves like an ajna, an asakta and is veritably paratantra. He then submits Himself to His fundamental guna of mercy, kindness and benevolence to the individual souls and awards them boons of not only worldly pleasures such as wealth of money, children and friends, but also the boon of boons that of 'MOKSHA' if asked for.

In Arcavatara God actually conceals His real nature and conducts Himself in the character of something devoid of knowledge, power or liberty.

'God is all-knowing and all-wise. He knows all things both in their essence and their attributes'- Mundaka Up. I.1-9. & II. ii. 7.

'Yah sarvajnah sarvavid yasya Jnanamayam tapah'
'Yah sarvajnah sarvavid yasyaisha mahima bhuvi
Divye Brahmapure hi esha vyomni atma pratishtitah'.
'Na tasya karyam karanam ca vidyate,
Na tat samascapi adhikasca drusyate-
Parasya saktir vividhaiva sruyate-
Sva-bhavikajnanabala kriya ca '-Svetasvatara Up. vi. 8.

God's power, wisdom, strength and swaying energy are quite natural to Him and inherent in Him. There cannot be His equal or better. His power is revealed to be various.

Hence God with all His Omnipotence can easily wash away the sins of His devotees and confer any boon on them. He is the one and the only power who can absolve men of their Karmas which otherwise have their sway. Hence the Lord in the incarnation of Arca is pleased out of His infinite mercy to confer on His devotees every needful boon.

'Sakala-phala-prado hi Vishnuh '- Refer Sri Vishnu dharma. Chap. 43.

Taittiriya up.-prasna VI entitled Narayana mantra-9 states:

'Over Him none rules'-

'He who is called the Lord Supreme

Rules all, sees all, knows all, works all.' Sri Vishnupurana VI. 5-86.

'Oh God, my father if this thy pure form were not to be there this wisdom of destroying all pain and gloom would not exist. Through qualities manifest, thou are known and these, thy form makes manifest'- Srimadbhagavata. 10.2.37.

It is only God that can grant us Liberation as He is the only one who can destroy our Karma and take us out of the cycle of births and deaths.

Lord Krishna says in the Gita : viii. 13

'Omityekaksharam Brahma Vyaharanmam - anusmaram,

Yah prayati tyajandeham sa yati paramam gatim'-

"He attains moksha who chants my sacred mono-syllabic name 'A.U.M.' at the time of departing from the body" says the Lord in the person of Krishna.

One of the Sankaracharya's disciple in Caturdasamanjari preaches:

'Geyam Gitanamasahasram'

The thousand names of God and the song divine, -ever sing'.

The Gita dhyana sloka says

'Kara-Kamala-ni-darsitatma-mudrah...

Mama hridi sannidhim atanotu saurih.

'Fix in my heart may Krishna stand, as He was seen distinctly pointing to Himself with lotus-hand'-

Also Gita references: IV.34, VII.17-19, XVI.2.

Isopanishad prefaced by Kathavalli khanda where Mantra 16 is a prayer for sight of God's most perfect form-The Purusha sukta also refers to the same idea. This Kathavalli khanda is commented upon in Sri Vacana Bhushana also.

'Idam Purnam; Adah Purnam; Purnat Purnam udrichyate-
Purnasya Purnam adaya Purnameva avasishyate'- Sarvam Purnam sah OM'-

'Geyam Gitanama sahasram
Dhyeyam Sripati-Rupam ajasram
Neyam saj-jana sangham a-nisam
Deyam dina-janaya ca Vittam'-

God in Arca form helps His devotees not only in their worldly affairs but also in their supra-mundane ambitions of Liberation- (atra-paratra capi).

13. It is universally admitted that the Saulabhya of the Lord reaches its zenith in Arca and arca only. It is the only Avatara form that is a veritable heaven for those entangled in the quick sands of samsara. It is the Arcavatara that provides the surest, safest and the easiest ground for the soul to surrender itself unconditionally before God. God is there in the idol ever waiting anxiously for the souls to be Prapatti at His lotus feet and receive HIS ABHAYA.

The forte of the Pancaratra Agamas is the installation and consecration of the idols, prescription of details of daily worship and periodical rituals, celebration of festivals, construction of temples and so on and so forth.

'Atha siddhantanam, samhitanam sastranam, alayanam, pujadyadikarinam, bimbanam, pujavidhinam-kainkaryam avasyam varnasrama-samucitasya pancaratrika pancakalika-samaradhanasya vaidhatvam ca stapayan tadvidhayaka pancaratragamasya kartsyena pramanyamapi'-Pancaratra Raksha.

About the greatness of the Pancaratra agamas it is often reiterated in the following words:

'Ata idam-'Vedanteshu yathasaram samgrahya Bhagavan Harih'-ityukta prakriyaya sarvavedantasaroddharena sarvajanahitaishina Bhagavatasrayameva pranitam srimat Pancharatrasastram sarvasutranishtanam upajivyam iti siddham'-

The Pancaratra agamas contain within themselves the quintessence of all the Vedas and the Vedantas in particular and prescribe practices for the weal and welfare of all. (Pancaratra Raksha).

The sacred places with temples and idols therein are usually classified into four:

1. Svayam Vyakta, 2. Divya, 3. Saiddha, 4. Manusha.

The modes of worship instituted are also classified into four categories:

1. Vaidika, 2. Tantrika, 3. Srouta, 4. Misra.

'Kshetrani ca Svyam Vyakta-Divya-Saiddha-Manusha-bhedena caturdha-

'Pancaratra Pujakramasca-Vaidika-Tantrika-Soruta-Misra-bhedena caturdha.'

In Paramesvara Samhita it is strictly enjoined that only the prescribed modes of worship should be followed and not any other in every temple as it exists or as it is established according to a particular type. There should never be any wilful admixture of rituals of worship. Any careless or fraudulent concatenation of different rituals and modes of worship will lead to adverse effects on the people and disaster to the state itself, it is averred-

'Yadbimbam yena sastrena samarabhdam puradiva,

Prāsādam vā tatastena sastrenaiva samarcayet'.

'Tacchastramantarenaïva yo yajed-anyavartmanā-

Rājno Rāshtrasya Kartusca sanāsam kartumicchati'.

'Na kadācidapi prājnah prakuryācchāstra samkaram,

Sāstrasamkara doshena mahāndosho bhaveddhruvam'-iti.

Again:

'Rishyādi pujite sthāne Paramparya kramam vinā,

Viśesham nācaret kincidrajarashtra-samriddhaye'-

Again the samhita stipulates that worship of idols by the enlightened should invariably be in terms of Divya sashtra.

'Divyasastrokta Vidhinā pūjayet sastrakovidah'-

There are prevalent the two ways of worship:

i. Divya Marga,

ii. Munivakyokta Marga.

The former is the prescribed one: the latter is the proscribed one.

'Vasudevena yatproktam sastram bhagavata svayam-

Sakshat Bhagavatpranitam Brahmarudrendra Pramukhaih pravartitam sastram, DIVYAM iti'.

The Divyagama consists of God's own utterances as expatiated upon and brought into vogue by great personages like Brahma and Rudra. It is the spoken words of God as paraphrased and put into practice.

'Svayam Vyaktam Sastram mulagamah'

'Divyam nama sakshat Bhagavatpranitam Brahmarudrabhih Pravartitam'-

'Caturvidham cedam Vedamulabhutamsasya Upabrahmanam'-

The Divyagama is in complete conformity with the self-revealed Mulagama. God Himself has given the Mulagama in His own words-It is to convey this idea perhaps that Mahabharata has stated:

'Mahato Vedvrikshasya Mulabhuto mahanayam'-ityadi.

It is in this context alone that the controversy whether the Pancaratra agama is Vedabahsya or not is resolved. It is

conclusively proved to the hilt that the Pancaratras cannot be outside the pale of the Vedas.

ii. The Munivakyokta marga consists of modes of worship as prescribed by the sages and saints and not by God Himself. In terms of the Mulagama,

'Brahma Rudra Mukhyaih Devaih Rishibhisca
Tapodhanaih,
Svayam pranitam yat sastram tadviddhi munibhashitam'-

(Brahmadibhih nirmitam sastram munibhashitam iti).

This Munibhashita sastra is itself of three types-(Munibhashitasya traividhyam)-Sattvik, Rajasik and Tamasic (also Paurusham).

1. Sakshat Bhagavatah srutarthamatra nibandhanarupam-Sastram Sattvikam,

2. Bhagavatah srutamekadesam svayogamahimasiddham-sesham samkalayya Brahmadibhistat sishyaisca svayam pranitam-sastram Rajasam,

3. Kevala svayogavikalpothnaih arthaih kritam sastram Tamasam.

(Kevala manujaih yat kritam tat Paurusham bhavet).

It is strictly enjoined that worship need not be conducted in terms of 'Munibhashita sastra'.

'Munivakyokta margena *na kuryat* pujanadikam,
Kuryadva yadiva mohadvipumsam mudhacetanah,
Ghoram prayati narakam Raja Rashtram ca nasyati'.
'Tasmat sarva prayatnena divyamargam na tyajet ' iti-Isvara samhita states:

"Sattvatadyam trikam caitat vyapakam munisattam" iti.

The Divyamarga should never be given up under all circumstances.

'Mula Vedadhikarina (Ekayana sakhadhyaitrunam) agama siddhante api asti adhikarah-eta eva Pancaratrasya mukhyadhi karinah-siddhantantareshu trayinishtanam ati tattat ukta dikshamulato vidyate adhikarah'-

'The authority for the Divyamarga is also qualified by the Mulagama.

As the Jayakhya Samhita says:

'Svayam vyakte tathadivye divya sastroktavartmana,
Mulagamasametena mukhyairbhagavataissada'-
Anekabheda bhinnam ca Pancaratrakhyamagamam,
Purvam agama siddhantam mantrakhyam tadanantaram,
Tantram tantrantaram ceti
Caturdha parikirtitam'.
Caturvidha pujanasya yathakramam:
'Vaidikam tantrikam srautam misram ceti caturvidham,
Vaidhikaih tantrikairvapi sroutairva dvijasattama,
Svayamvyakte tu bhavane misrairva devamarcayet'.
'Rishyadi pujite sthane paramparya kramum vina,
Visesham nacaret kincidrajarashtra samruddhaye'.
Manushe bhavane Devam tantramargena pujayet'.

'Bhagavan mandireshu bhagavato arcarupinah pujanirvartanopayoginam vidhina vividhanam vivarana purassaram-Agama-siddhanta, Mantra siddhanta, tantra siddhanta tantrantara ; siddhanta bhedena Pancaratrasya caturvidhatvam':

Worship is according to agama siddhanta or, mantra siddhanta or tantra siddhanta or tantrantara siddhanta-fourfold:

'Caturvidhamapidam Pancaratram Vedamulamsasya bhavati Upabrahmanan'-

It is further asserted that some of the samhitas are Divya, some Sattvika, some Rajasa and some others Tamasa.

'Sattvata, Paushkara Jayakhyadayo Divyah,

Isvara, Bharadvaja Saumantavadayah Sattvikah,
Sanatkumara, Padmodbhava, Satata padayo Rajasah,
Pancaprasna, Sukaprasna, Tattvasagaradayastamasah samitha iti.

Siddhanta etc prayojanaviseshapekshaya-Svayamvvyakta-Saiddha-Divyorshabhedena va,
Veda-siddhanta-Divya siddhanta-Tantra siddhanta-Purana siddhanta bedhena va-Vibhajyante.
Kshetranica Savyam Vyakta-Divya-Saiddha Manusha-bhedena caturdha.

The Hayagriva samhita underlines Mokshapradatvam-Bestowing salvation, Moksha, absolute release from rebirth in Arcavatara to the devotees and prapannas.

'Agamakhyam hi siddhantam sanmokshaika-phalapradam,
Mantrasamjnam hi siddhantam siddhi-moksha padam nrinam,
Tantra śamjnam tu siddhantam caturvarga phalapradam
Tantrantaram hi siddhantam vancitartha phalapradam.

The agama siddhanta, it is presumed is sure to confer Moksha on the worshippers. Of course everyone does not seek Moksha-only a select few does so.

In Mahabharata:

'Caturvida mama jana bhakta eva hi te srutah,
Tesham Ekantinah sreshthaste caiva nanya devatah,

The best of God's devotees are called the 'Ekantins' or the 'Paramekantins'-

Paramascasau ekantasceti paramaikantah,
So asyastiti Paramaikanti,
Ekatra anto niscayah prapyataya prapakataya ca
Tadubhayam sambhuya Paramaikantah.
Paramascasau ekanti ca iti vasamasah.

Tatrapi ananyopayatvat ananyaprayojanatvayoh samuccayat Paramyam.

Ananyopayatvam ca ananya ananyadevatakatva paryantam

Ananyaprayojanatvam ca atmanubhavananda nairapekshya-paryantam-

The Jayakhya samhita says:

'Pancakalika krutyaih Paramapurushameva ye santata samupasate ta eva Paramaikantinah-ananya Devata-katvameva Paramaikantinah parama nishtha'-

The Paramaikantins are those who depend on the one and the only God Narayana and on none else. This class of devotees seek from God nothing other than Paramasayujya, Moksha. They want nothing else.

The same idea is emphasised in many places in the Gita:

'Kamaih taistaihrutajnanah prapadyante anyadevatah-
Antavattu phalam tesham tadbhavati alpamedhusham,
Jaramarana mokshaya mamasritya yatanni ye
Te Brahma tadviduh kritsnamadhyatmam karma cakhilam,
Tasmat sarveshu kaleshu man anusmara yudhya ca.
Mayyarpitamanobuddhih mamevaishysya samsayah,
Matkarmakrit matparamah madbhaktah sangavarjitah,
Nirvairah sarvabhuteshu yah sa mameti Pandavah,
Bahunam Janmanamante jnanavanmam prapadyate,
Vasudevah sarvamiti samahata sudurlabhah,
Abrahmabhuvanallokat punaravartinorjuna,
Mamupetyatu Kaunteya punarjanma na vidyate'-
The samhita reiterates:
'Ananyadevata bhakta ye madbhaktajanapriyah,
Mameva saranam praptaste madbhaktah prakirtitah,

The samhita decries the followers of other faiths in these words:-

'Saivam Pasupatam sprushtva lokayatikanastikan
Vikarmasthan dvijan sudran Savasa jalamaviset.'
Jainalayam pravishtastu savasa jalamaviset,

Saunaka says: .

'Parangmukhanam Govinde vishayasakta cetasam,

Tesham tat paramam Brahma duraddurataro sthitam, Evam parimita vishayatyaginam parimitadevatamtara tyago niyato bhavati.

'Paramatmani yo rakto virakto aparamatmani,
Sarvekshana vinirmuktah sa bhaiksham bhoktum arhati'.

Vyasamaharshi says:

'Na Vishnuvaradhanat punyam vidyate, karma Vaidikam,
Sarveshameva dharmanamuttamo Vaishnavo vidih'.-

Sandilya says:

'Dvadasakshara tattvajnascaturvyuha vibhagavit,
Achidra Pancakalajnah sa tu Bhagavatah smrutah'.
Caturvyuha vibhagajnah Pancakala Parayanah,
Dvadasakshara nishto yah sa vai Bhagavatottamah'.

Ramanujacharya says:

'Dhyanna pi Param devam kaleshu ukteshu Pancasu,
Vartamanah sade caivam Pancakalika vartamana'.

Sri Parasarabhatta says:

'Garbhajanma jaradukkhamisra samsara sagarat,
Uttirya Bhagavat pra...
Pratharuthaya samsruty...
Ganga vibhavya tirthambas......
Srutismrutyuditam karma yavacchaktiparau
Aradhanatvenapadya sordhvapundrasca tarpa,...

Badarayana has said:-

'Nanyam devam namaskuryad Vishnupadabja samsrayah: iti.

Karmana paripatatvada virincadamangalam,
Iti mattva viraktasya Vasudevaha Paragatih'.

Again:

'Brahmacari Grihastho va Vanaprasstho atha Bhikshukah,
Kesavaradhanam hitva yati Paramgatim iti'.

Yajnavalkya says:

'Vishnurbrahma ca Rudrasca
Vishnurdevo divakarah,
Yasmat pujyatamam na-
Nyamaham manye Janardhanat'.

God Narayana is PARAMESHTI- Parame pade tishtahtiti Parameshti-Sa ca tamasah Parastat-

Tad Vishnoh Paramam Padam-ityukte-

'Suddha sattvamaye Vaikuntha samjnake loke vartamanah Purushottama eva'-

That is why it is said:

'Dhyayennaravanam Devam Snanadishu ca karmasu,
Brahmalokamavapnoti naccha jayate punah'.

Saunaka says:

'Harimeva smarennityam karmapurvapareshu ca'.

In Jayakhya samhita it is said:

'Sayanasanayanadavasaktascapi bhojane,
Hridgatam na tyajet dhyanamanandaphaladam hi yat-
Alodhya sarva sastrani vicarya ca punah punah,
Idamekam sunishpannam Dhyeyo Narayanah Sada,
Kim kim na sadhyam Bhagavadaradhanaparaih Naraih,
Vaishnavanam viseshena svayametatprayojanam'.

Apart from granting Moksha to a few who crave for it, God Narayana looks after the daily welfare of His devotees also.

'Manishino hi ye kechidyatayo mokshakankshinah,
Tesham vai cchinna trushnanam yogashemavaho Harih'.

He has promised:

'Ananyaschintayanto man ye janah paryupasate,
Tesham nityabhiyuktanam yogaksheman vahamyaham'-

Again:

Apart from granting 'Release' also, God gives every assurance for all material pleasures even.

'Sarirarogyamarthamsca bhogamscaivanushangikan,
Dadati dhyayinam nityamapavargaprado Harih'.

In Vishnu Dharma:

'Uttishthascintaya Harim Vrajamscintaya Kesavam,
Bhunjascintaya Govindam Svapamscintaya Madhavam' iti,
Vyarthham vikshya gatam kalam nirvidyahamitah param,
Aradhayeyam dhyayeyam bhajeyam Purushottamam,
Kirtayeyam namasyeyam cintayeyamanaratam,
Vrajeyam saranam ceti niscityamanasa svayam'-

In Paramesvara samhita:

'Samprabuddhah prabhatetu utthaya sayane sthitah,
Namnam samkirtanam kuryat shodasanam prayatnatah'.

The agamas insist one should be a stickler to shastra vidhis so far as worship of God is concerned. Just as a married woman protects carefully her 'mangalya sutra' and dress so also one should be an acarasila so far as rituals of worship are concerned

'Mangalya Sutra vastradin samrakshati yatha vadhuh,
Tatha prapannah sastriya patikainakarya paddhatim'-

Every detail of worship, prayer, pilgrimage and even entry into a temple is discussed. For instance Padmatantra discusses

about the type of flowers to be offered to God in its Pushpa prakarna.

The Sattvata samhita discourses on pilgrimages, disciplines of prostration before the Sanctum such as Ashtanga pranama, Dvadasanga pranama and so on. For instance about Ashtanga pranama the definition is given,

'Urasā sirasā vācā manasā ca kapolatah,
Padbhyām karābhyām jānubhyām pranāmoshtānga ucyate'.

Offerings received from thieves, misers etc. should not be submitted to God, it is said:

'Taskarat patitat shandadumbhalobhamadanvitat,
Matravittam na grihniyat abhaktadupacaratah'.

The efficacy of intoning the 'ASHTAKSHARA' and 'DVADASAKSHARA' mantras in prayerful moods is emphasised.

Immediate realisation of Godhead in the idol is always assured in terms of the types of rituals and prayers prescribed by the agamas. -Yatha vidhi, yatha mantra, yatha sampradaya-

Bodhayana has highly praised the efficacy of the Ashtakshara mantra-

'Evam guroh samarabhya mantranushtanamacaret'
'Ashtaksharam japet vidvan nityan ashtasahasrakam'.
'Ashtaksharo jape yasya nityo naimittikopi va,
Karyovapi bhavettasya nitya devarcana smrutah'-
Three types of pujas are usually in vogue.
'Manasi homa puja ca berapujeti sā tridhā'-

About Berapuja:-

'Yathopayogasakyatvat kartum pushpadi pujanam,
Cakshushah pritikarananmanasopi tathaiva ca'.
'Pritya sanjayate Bhaktih bhaktyasya sulabho Harih,
Tasmat prayenametesham BERA puja visishyate'-

As Saunaka says:

'Surupam pratimam Vishnoh...
Tamarcayettam pranamettam.
Yajettam vicintayet,
Visatyapastadoshastu tameva Brahmarupinim.

Ato yatra kvacit Bhagavadrupe yatha sakti nirantaranusandhanam Nathamuniprabhrutivat siddhopayairpi nirvesa niyam'.

Even Prahlada:

'Ayasah smarane ko asya smrito
Yacchati sobhanam,
Papakshayasca bhavati smaratam tamaharnisam'.

Arjuna says to Krishna:

'Drashtumicchami te rupamaisvaram Paramesvara,
Manyase yadi tacchakyam mayadrashtumiti Prabho,
Yogesvaratatomeivam darsayatmanamavyayam'.

Krishna later says:

'Satatam Kirtayanto mam'-
'Tasmat Sarveshu Kaleshu'
'Mamanusmara'.

Singing God's praise at all times is advocated. Even in asouca kalas one may do samkirtanam it is said.

'Dhyayennarayanam Devam snanadishu ca karmasu,
Brahmalokamavapnoti naccha jayate punah'.

Saunaka says:

'Harimeva smarennityaanam karma purvapareshu ca,
Cakrayudhasya namani sada sarvatra kirtayet'.
'Nasaucam kirtane tasya smarane vapi vidyate,
Asuciscapyanacarah sarvavastham gato pi va,
Ya smaret Pundarikaksham sabahyabhyantarah sucih'.

'Ityadibhih Kirtana smaranayoh asoucakalepi anushte-ytoktesh'.

'Samkirtayejjaganatham Vedam vapi samirayet,
Dhyayan krute yajan yajnaih
Tretayam Dvapare arcayan,
Yadapnoti tadapnoti Kalau
Samkirtya Kesavam'.

Even in sleep and during dreams one can worship God if only one cares just to remember Him and think of Him and Him only.

'Yukta svapnavabodhasya' iti smaranat-Nidraiva tadu kainkaryam.

'Evam Vartamanasya sarvah kalopi avandhyo bhavati-Sarve vyaparah kainkarya rupa bhavanti'.

Every one of our activities can be a kainkarya to God, a worship of God if only we remember Him always.

'Nityam Vishnvarcanam Param'-
Svalpamapi asya dharmasya trayate mahato bhayat'-

Even a little of the worshipful attitude will spare a man from the greatest of fears.

'Sakruduccaritam yena Harirityaksharadvayam,
Baddhad parikarastena mokshayagamanam pratih'.

Uttering the two letters HA and RI takes one on to the path to Moksha.

Sounaka says:

'Kīrtanādeva Krishnasya muktabandhah param vrajet'-
'Prapannabhimatabhagavatpritese tavataiva sulabhatvacca sarvadesa-sarvakaladhikaryaḍyanugunam samkirtanameva'.

Samkirtana, reciting and singing the glory of God is the easiest and the best way of approaching God.

The very remembrance of Govinda sets fire to the mounting heaps of papas (sins) earned by individuals.

'Sakrit Smrutopi Govindo nrinām janmasataiscitam,

Pāparāsim dahatyāsu tūlarāsimivānilah'.

'Harirharati papani dushtacittairapi smritah,

Anicchyapi samsprishto dahatyevahi pavakah'.

Who gets tired by recounting the greatness of God? None whatsoever-

'Āyasah smarane koasya smrito yacchati sobhanam

Papakshayasca bhavati smaratam tamaharnisam'.

Patra, pushpa, phala, toya, these constitute the essentials of offerings of course with bhakti-

'Patreshu pushpeshu phaleshu toye,

Shvakritalabhyeshu sadaiva sastu,

Bhaktyekalabhye Purushe purane,

Muktyai kimartham kriyate na yatnah'.

'Patram pushpam phalam toyam yo me bhaktyaprayacchati,

Tadaham bhaktyupahritamasnami prayatatmanah'-God *Has said.*

'Evam ashtaksharenaiva sarvatrarcana karmani,

Upacaraniman kurvan bhaktiyuktena cetasa'-

'Tulasi Padmapalasa suvarna kusumaih subhaih'

'Pujayitva Jagannatham phalamanantyamasnute'.

'Gaudhaih Pushpaih phalairmalaih patrairvaribirevava,

Nityam Bhagavatah pujam yathasambhavamacaret'.

Thus Sakshad Vishnu's worship is for one's self-realisation.

'Samasta Lokanathasya Devadevasya Sarnginah,

Sakshadbhagavato Vishnu Pujanam Janmanah phalam' iti.

If worship is done without 'mantram' and proper offerings it is considered harmful not ony to the individual worshipper but also to the society.

Quotes -

'Sarpam drishtva yatha kayam kampate ca muhurmuhuh,
Amantramarcakam drishtva tatha bhito Janardhanah'.
'Gandhahine bhayotpattih pushpahine tu sankulam,
Naivedyahine durbhiksham maranam mantrahinake'.
'Amantram avidhim caiva akalam caiva pujanam,
Nityam Rashtrabhayam kuryat tadgramamtu vinasyati'.
'Amantrenaiva yatpujyam pisacasuravardhanam,
Vyadhitaskaradoshauca anavrishtir-mahadbhayam,'-

If God is not offered food daily, there will be famine and food scarcity. If worship is not conducted with proper 'Mantras' there will be ruin threatening the country in the form of epidemics, robberies and drought conditions.

Even Manu reminds us:

'Vedoditam avakam karma nityam kuryadatandritah,
Taddhi kurvan yathasakti prapnoti paramamgatim'.

Bhagavan Saunaka Muni underlines three essential aspects of Lord's worship:

'Ragadyapetam hridyam vagadushtanrutadina;
Himsadirahitah kayah Kesavaradhanam trayam'.

In Ahirbudhnya samhita it is stated:

'Samaradhayatastvevamekahamapi Narada,
Muktih karesthita tasya sarve kamasca kim punah'-

God's worship endows on the worshipper 'Sakala Purusharthas'-

God will be immensely pleased, more than all with the offerings by the devotees of their internal mental flowers of honesty, sincerity, kindness, charity, forgiveness and such others.

'Bhagavadaradhane antarapushpadinam mukhyatvam:'
'Ahimsa prathamam pushpam pushpamindriyanigrahah,
Sarvabhutadaya pushpam Kshama pushpam viseshatah'.

'Jnanam pushpam tapah pushpam dhyanam pushpam tu Saptamam, Satyamevashtamam pushpam tena tushyati KESHAVAH'.

There is sanction for image worship in the Vedas too.

According to Vedic thought Divinity incarnates itself in the idol just as it does in the human beings and hence it is called Arcavatara. In the Vedas the Supreme is described by different names to begin with such as Indra, Agni, Varuna etc., and different functions are attributed to each one of the forms. But it is well known that what the Vedas proclaim is fundamentally and ultimately monotheism.

'EKAM SAT Viprah bahuda vadanti,
EKAM SAT bahuda kalpayanti'.

We have in the Vedas, even in the Mantras and Brahmanas many references to the existence of a personnel God.

Yu va kumarah, sakha-young with long life and a friend,
Satya adbhutah-True and wonderful,
Rishvata Indrastha Virasya bahu-
Aprayaccha dakshinat ota savyat-

Your arms are strong, Oh God- Give us with your right hand or with your left hand-

'Ya evontara aditye hiranmayah Purusho drisyate hiranmayah smasruh hiranmaya kosa anakhat sarva eva suvarnah'-

The Purusha seen within the sun is seen with golden-hair, golden complexion, golden whiskers and everything including nails golden-

While Surya is thus worshipped in a personal form the qualities and attributes of the impersonal such as Satyam, Jnanam and Anantam are also attributed to Him. The abstract ideas of the Divinity have shaped themselves into the material forms of the images.

The relation between the God in a Form and the Formless infinite in the Vedas is interpreted in two ways. Some say the Formless infinite gets incarnated in the Form just to satisfy the yearnings of the finite mind.

'Namani ciddhadhireyajni yani'
'Ajayamano bahudha vijayate'

He takes on different worshippable names. The unborn takes birth in different shapes.

Others say that the Forms given to the Infinite are the deliberate creations of the imaginations of the Mystic. They rely on the texts given below:-

'Hrida Manisha Manasa abhikalpitah,
Hrida tashtehshu manasa vipascitah,'
He is made up by the mind of man;
He is carved by the human mind-

Another text reads:-

'Agne Bhurini tava jataveda devasva,
Dhanah Amritasya tamaya sca maya mayinam Visva
Minvatve purvaussadadhuh prushtan dyo'-

Oh God, they names are legion; they have been given thee by the devotees. Under necessity they gave the particular names suited to particular occasions. The worship of a number of Gods is discernible also in a number of Mantras and Brahmanas of the Vedas. The Divine gets drawn into the image on account of the beauty of its form by Samprokshana and Puja. In this form he finds it possible to experience the Divine in various ways.

'Yatha yuvanam Rajanam yatha ca madahastinam,
Yatha Priya athitim tadvat'.

Worship the God as if He were a young prince; a sturdy elephant in rut, a very beloved guest etc. For the ordinary devotee it is a means whereby his occasional spells of doubt and scepticism are dispelled.

'Sandarsanat, agasmacca pumsam samuddhacetasam,
Kuvasana kubuddhisca kutarka niscayascayah,
Kuhetusca kubhavasca nastikatvam layam vrajet'.

'For me who get lost in the vortex of worldly affairs it is a source of inspiration and spiritual guidance in every possible way. One basic fact should never be lost sight of. The aim of Vedic religion is universal well-being and the good of all. This aim was originally realised through the performance of 'Yagas'. Shift to the worship of a Personal God, Temple worship has replaced the Yagas. Particularly Griha arca and Alaya arca.

'Gurubhajana netrabhaja mathi tava havyena Venkatesvara,

Navanitamiva grihitam

Navanitamiva grihitam navakamidam nitya masvadayam-

No doubt there are innumerable references to the worship of a Personal God in the Vedas although the general emphasis in the earlier portion of the Vedas particularly in the Mantras and Brahmanas is on the performance of Yagas and Yajnas to pleace different deities. To say outright that the Vedas do not refer to image worship at all is however preposterous. The emphasis in the Agama is ofcourse obviously on the worship of a personal God who cannot be bereft of qualities. The God of the Pancaratras is definitely 'Shadgunya-Paripurna'. He resides in the hearts of individuals as also in consecrated idols.

Nammalvar says:

Kangal sivandu periyavāy vāyum sivandu ulle,
Venpalilagu śudavilagu vilagu makarakundalattam,
Koudlvannan śudarmudiyan nangutolan kuni-śarangan,
Vanshankade vālāliyān oravvanadiyenullāne' -(VIII. 8-1)

In his Gitabhashya Ramanuja writes:

'Sādhavah-Ukta lakshana dharmasilau Vaishnavagresarah' matsamasrayane pravrittah mannamakarmasvarupanam vangmanasa gocarataya maddarsanenavina svatma dharana poshanadikam alabhamaṇah kshanamatrakala kalpasahasram

manvanah prasithila sarvagatra bhaveyuriti matsvarupa ceshtitavalokanalapadi danena tesham paritranaya, tadviparitanam vinasaya ca, kshinasya ca vaidikasya dharmasya madaradhana rupasya aradhyasvarupa pradarsanena sthapanaya ca devamanushyadirupena yuge yuge sambhavami.'

That God the supreme person incarnates in different forms and particularly in the Arca form also, is revealed by God Himself in different contexts and under innumerable and varied circumstances.

Kurattalvan (Srivatsa Chinha Misra) writes:

'Evam sthite tvadupasamsraya nabhyu payo
Manena kena cidalapsya tanopalabdhum
Noceda martyamanujadishu yonishutvam
Iccha vihara vidhina samavatarishyah'.

Oh God, thou who are beyond anyone's ken, eyes or manas, if you were not to descend into Avatars assuming the forms of Devas and Manushyas for your leelas there would have been no other means of proving or illustrating to the world that Y O U are to be worshipped.

Similarly in Sundarabahustava Sri Sukti it is said:

Simhadrinatha! Tava Vangmanasa-vrittam rupam hyatindriya mudaha rahasyavani-Even ca natvamiha cet samavatarishyah tvad jnanabhakti vidhayodhya mudha-bhavishyam'-

Oh Simhagirinatha of 'Tirumaliram Solai Malai' the upanishads say your form is beyond the approach of Vak and Manas. Under these circumstances if you were not to undertake Avatars, how are we to know you? - We must know God; we must bear devotion to Him'. These words of the Vedas would be a meaningless futility (If you were not to undertake Avatars and let be known to us. Now that you have assumed the form and role of an Acarya and descended at this place, your Darshan is made available and opportunity for illustration of Bhakti is possible

When the Vedapurusha and Bhaktas want to see God's Divyaleela and praise them in songs, God to please them assumes the roles of Avatars and displays His divyaleelas.

Not only for the sake of the yearning devotees, even for the sake of the non-devotees of God who may be indifferent or inimical to Him just to wean them away from the darkness of their ignorance and help them on to the righteous path, God frequently undertakes descensions.

Of course in the Gita Lord Krishna has Himself stated:

'Paritranaya sadhunam vinasaya ca dushkrutam,
Dharmasamsthapanarthaya sambhavami yuge yuge'.

I be born (I descend into Avatara forms) from age to age for three patent reasons:-

i. Protecting the good,
ii. Punishing and even annihilating the wicked,
iii. Upholding and re-establishing Dharma.

The maximum descension of God from Vaikunta is into Vibhavatara and Arcavatara for the simple reason of Mercy. Apart from being all-powerful, God is all-merciful. He has often descended into Avatara forms just to help devotees like Indra and others or even man-like Rishis at the hands of Ravana, Kamsa, Sisupala etc. That was how Ramavatara and Krishnavatara came to be. While the Parasvarupa is meant for the Nityas and Muktas outside the samsara mandala and away from the cycle of births and deaths. While the Vyuha svarupa is meant for the Devatas at the Milky ocean and the Antaryami svarupa for the Yogis, the Vibhavas like Ramavatara and Krishnavatara are specially meant for particular yugas and also specific purposes. The Arcavatara is meant for all people at all times and particularly for the house-holders, the samsaris. Arcavatara is the maximum concession that God has shown to man for easy access unto Him through self-surrender and utmost faith, worship and devotion.

'Yato vaco nivartante-
Aprapya manasa sah'.

God is said to be 'Sakaletara Vilakshana'-beyond the ken of Indriya-vak, manas etc. Although He can be known through the Vedas how to see Him if He has no form? How to love Him and worship Him if He is not revealed even to Manas? How to praise Him if we cannot hear Him? Of what use is He if He is beyond every knowing organ?

Some argue on the lines of Isvaranumana-That God can be inferred-They use the analogy of a potter to prove the existence of God. A potter to make pots requires a body with hands, feet etc. The potter has origin, (Vyutpatti) growth (Vriddhi) Change (Vikara) and an end also (Vinasa)-Can we then apply this 'Sadrusyanumana'-analogical reasoning to God also? Further the potter requires tools like a stick, a wheel which are themselves to be made by a carpenter, a smith etc. Also pots cannot be made without mud. Making pots implies a profit motive on behalf of the potter. The potter requires a place to work (karyalaya), the tools (upakarana) a basic substance like earth (upakarana) out of which pots can be made, a purpose (prayojana) etc. We can never say God requires all these nor can we ever dream of comparing a potter with God the Almighty. God's powers are 'Lokavilakshana'-different from the ordinary and the worldly, what we know of-God cannot be inferred-He is beyond everything. It is well-known fact that God is all purity and sanctity. When He can remove all the filth of our samsara and burn away all our accrued sins and bestow on us the purity of Moksha how Pure He must Himself be? Our senses are themselves 'asuddha' impure. With these 'asuddha' organs, how can we perceive the 'suddha' God the suddha vastu. That is why God is not 'Indriya Gocara'-Kurattalvan (Srivatsacinha) says in Atimanusha stava:

'Sabdadi heya iha gocara indriyanam,
Tatpratyanika Vibhavastvamatindriyosi'

Tenaiva te batana darsanamasti kinca,
Vacodhiyasca tata eva nagocarosi'.

'The indriyas can perceive the asuddha padarthas. You God have quite the opposite of these (parisuddha). Therefore you are 'atindriya'. That is why you are beyond the approach of Vak and Manas'.

God can be known only through testimony (Sastra yonitvat)- Badarayana 1-1-3. God can be known only through the Vedas and the Agamas, not by any other means. Badarayana simply says 'That which creates, sustains and destroys the Universe' that is Brahman.

The scriptures say God has 'Ananta kalyana gunagana'. The most prominent of this gunagana is 'PREMA'- Because of this basic trait of His namely 'Karuna' God reveals Himself. He assumes a DIVYA SARIRA which the devotees can see and then fall at His feet. That is why God is called 'Bhakta Paradhina' with His 'Divya Mangala Vigraha'.

Manavalamamuni says: Papa, the sins committed by individuals is not like any castor plant that grows out of rubbish and then strangles him like a snake. It is not such a thing. The individual as such may conveniently forget his papas the very moment of committing them. But God as Karmadhyaksha remembers well all the papas of all the individuals. But if God wills, He can burn them off. He is capable of both 'Nigraha' and 'Anugraha'. That is why He declares 'Moksha Ishyami' because He has the three great attributes of-

i. Sarva Vyapti,
ii. Sarvajnatva
iii. Sarva Sakti.

God is usually described as the greatest ocean of all the greatest attributes: 'Asamkhyeya Kalyanagunaganaugha-maharnava' He has such a love even for the sinners that unknown to them He helps them, protects them and finally even weans them back to the fold of His ardent devotees-

"Iramadamuttu varaippole ullepadakidandu sattaiye pidittu nokkikkondu poram"- (Mumukshuppadi). A rich man becoming poor going incognito and entering dharmasalas during nights and anonymous donors feeding and helping these unwilling recipients, in the same way God established in the hearts of individuals unnoticed by them helps them and protects them under all circumstances. That is a pointer to God's unlimited mercy and benevolence. A lunatic with all assumed self-importance may forsake food at the hands of his mother, wander away from home and be starving to death. The loving mother goes in search of her truant son, locates him and gets him fed with her own food at the hands of strangers unknown to him. God's mercy towards men even surpasses the love of a mother to her son.

'Kvaha matyanta durbuddhih Kvacatma hita vikshanam,

Yaddhi tam mama devesa tadajnapaya Madhava'-Jitante - Stotra.

'I have no idea as to what is good for myself. Please yourself grant me whatever you decide good for me'-

Prahlada a great devotee of Vishnu :

'Ya pritiravivekanam vishayeshvanapayini,

Tvamanusmara tadassame hridayanma-pasarpratu'-(Vishnu-purana 1-20-19).

"What intensity of craving and attachment the unenlightened have towards the objects of senses, oh God please grant me the same intensity of love and liking for your blessed feet".

Even out of His abundant mercy if God were to appear before His devotees and leave the choice of boon to themselves, how many do really ask for Moksha? Often most of the devotees tease God for petty things. Hiranyakasipu and Ravana begged boons to harass others and rule all the three worlds. Of the Svayambhuva Manus there was a Prajapati by name Sutapas with his wife by name Prisni. They did hard penance for a long time. When God presented Himself before them, they did not

ask Him for Moksha. Rather they asked Him 'Santana'. They later became Vasudeva and Devaki and bore Krishna. Krishna Himself reveals this to them immediately after He was born.

'Yuvam vai Brahmanaadishtau------------

Te pathe paramam tapah'.

Pradurasam Varadarat yuvayoh kamaditsya.

'Vriyatam vara ityukte madriso vam vritassutah

Ajushtagramya vishaya ena patyaca dampatih' Bhagavata 10-3. Nava vrate apavargam me mohitau mama mayaya

Often God has to undertake Avatars just to keep up to His words of promise to His devotees. Devaki and Vasudeva had sought a boon craving for a son and God had to descend. The Gopis, Akrura, Malakara were all anxiously waiting for the Avatara. Similarly Sharabhanga maharshi and Shabari and others would refuse to go to heaven even and were waiting for Ramavatara. In Gajendra Moksha, God rode the Garuda, went in person and killed the crocodile with His Discus. He could have done it from a distance; but Gajendra wanted to present Him a lotus held high in his Proboscis.

Saunaka maharshi in 'Vishnu dharma' has mentioned:

'Naham kalebarasyasya tranarthan Madhusudhana,

Karastha Kamalanyeva padayorpitam tava'-

Similarly why should the Lord have assumed the Vamanavatara just to beg back the three worlds usurped by Bali. Kurattalvan (Srivatsacinha misra) poses the question in 'Atimanusha-Stava'-

'While you are the Creator Himself of all the Universes while at the time of Pralaya the entire Universe resided in your stomach, why beg Bali'?

'Tvannirmita jatharaga ca tava triloki kim bhikshan-adiyamrute bhavata dura pa.

'Madhye kada tu navicakramishe jagaccet,
Tvadvikramaih kathamiva srutiranjita syat'-

Often the question is raised 'Why should God undertake the laborious ordeal of a descension. A mighty Lord that too who can create, sustain and destroy He could have simply willed Ravana to die and Ravana and all his clan would have instantaneously perished : Why then Ramavatara? Once while playing a game of dice at the harem in Dwarka, a Sunyadevata sent by Kasiraja began to rampage Dwarka town from one end to the other end burning it down. Krishna was actually most undisturbed and deeply absorbed in the game. His Chakrayudha just did it. It chased away the Devata and burnt Kasi too. Why then an arduous Krishnavatara for God the supreme? Similarly about saving Prahlada from Hiranyakasipu-was a Narasimhavatara necessary?

The simple and the only answer seems to be this: To provide opportunities for all to see Him, talk to Him and enjoy His Divya leelas God takes on to the Avataras. It is to fulfil His promised engagements, to personally console the yearning souls and converse with them that God descends from His distant abode particularly in a human form or any form that the devotees wish Him to assume. Many simply yearn to see the beautiful figure of God in flesh and blood. God provided them their opportunities particularly in Ramavatara and Krishnavatara. In Dandakaranya the poor Rishis harassed by Rakshasas like Khara and Dushana were waiting for ages to complain to Rama. But the moment they actually saw Him they forgot all their worries and pains and began to pine for Rama's sake. If ever anything were to happen to such a beautiful Rama, our Rama at the hands of these Rakshasas, what are we to do? and they began to chant 'Jaya! jaya! in the form of Mangalasasana-the ordinary mortals trying to bless their almighty GOD! That was their real love for God. One of the Alwars namely Periyalwar had the rare privilege of seeing God in person. When Lord Vishnu presented Himself before Him He was so much overwhelmed by the

beauty of God's personality that this poor Alwar forgot that God was Sarvajna, Sarvasakta and Sarvarakshaka and truly became panicky about God's safety. He immediately began to bless the Almighty with his protective song in 11 stanzas. The song has become a famous hymn ever since with the title 'TIRUPALLANDU'- it begins as:

'Pallandu pallandu pallayarattandu
Palkodi nurayaramum
Mallandathindol Manivanna
Unn Sevvadi Sevvithirukkappu'-

Surpanakhi even with her nose and ears clipped exclaimed to her brother about the beauty of Rama and Lakshmana-'Tarunam rupasampannau'.

Tara steeped in deep sorrow by her husband's death had thought of accusing Rama for having wilfully killed her husband Vali, but the moment she saw Rama, she began to praise Him herself being a great jnani and having known fully God's greatness. Even Marica while referring to Sri Rama with Ravana says 'Aprameyam hi tattejah yasya sa janakatmaja'- That is the great beauty of Lord's personality even in Avatara forms. Of course God is everywhere and in everything as Antaryami as Satahkopa Munindra has sung:

'Unnum Soru Parakkuniru
Tinnum Vaittilaiyumellam Kannan'-

The sustaining food, the nourishing waters, the relishing tambulam, everything is God Himself. He is, but is imperceptible in everything like oil in 'TILA'-He lives with His Divyamangala vigraha, in the lotus of the heart of the yogis who seek Him within themselves. That God has a Divyamangala Vigraha form no sashtra doubts. The parama dharma, apart from so many other types of dharmas, is to worship God in person it is said. We cannot have a living Rama or Krishna particularly in the present yuga. We can rather have an image, a murthi in

which God in any form we choose resides. This is the secret and significance of IDOLATRY.

Most of the Agamas deal with temples, idols to be installed, rituals of worship etc. As already referred to in previous chapters so far as the general content of the Agama is concerned the subject matter is dealt with under four heads:-

i. Jnana: Knowledge which is release, moksha or mukti.

ii. Yoga: Concentration on the subject

iii. Kriya: Action: including all actions from laying the foundations of the temple to completion of the sacred edifice, installation and consecration of images in the temple according to prescribed rules and rituals.

iv. Karya: Performance of daily worship other rites and rituals and conducting festivals etc., according to prescribed methods.

This is the general outlay or plan in every Samhita. Varying emphasis is laid on these four 'Padas' or sections in the general plan. In most of the Samhitas predominance is given to the last two sections, the practical portions of KRIYA and KARYA padas. They are dealt with in great detail. Mostly every Agama Samhita deals with temple architecture-design and construction. It is something remarkable that the ancient seers and sages had such extraordinary insight into engineering skill. In the context of temple construction they discourse on town planning and other allied information on the construction of 'Gopura' temple towers, 'Prasada', 'Saudha', 'Devasthana', 'Matha', 'Mandira', 'Yajnasala', 'Gajasvasala', 'Yantra nirmana', yantropakarana, sadhana, residential quarters for all the artists, craftsman and attendants-all these are dealt with under 'Vastuprakarana'. The same 'Vastuprakaranas' when dealt with separately and in detail is called 'Vastu sastra'. Even Geology and Geo-physics are dealt with. For instance they deal with the information about what type of 'Bhumi' to select, how to find out the 'Bhumi Lakshanas, etc.

In fact a typical shrine (temple) is said to have seven essential features:

Kshetra	-	Locality,
Tirtha	-	Sacred tank,
Mandapam	-	Pavilion,
Vimanam	-	Dome of the Sanctum,
Nadi	-	River,
Nagara	-	Town,
Aranya	-	Forest.

A shrine associated with these seven features is called a 'Saptamrita kshetra'-shrine of the seven nectars.

The Hindu temple is a product of many skills and techniques such as those of the architect, the sculptor, the painter, the smith, the carpenter, the bricklayer, the glyptic stucco etc. etc. The true Overseer and over-all master of temple construction-design and execution strictly in conformity to the Agamas is the Sthapati. The temple in its form should *prima facie* represent the Godhead within. The basic shapes the early architects accepted from or adumbrated in Brihat samhita, Vishnu dharmottara etc. are:

1. Caturasra	-	The square,
2. Ayatasra	-	Rectangular,
3. Vrittayata	-	Eliptical,
4. Vritta	-	Circular,
5. Ashtaṣra	-	Octagonal.

These five basic shapes also include the apsidal or 'Gajaprishta' form so repeatedly employed in many temples in the South.

The Silpa sastra of the Agamas gives great prominence to the 'Devata murthi Nirmana Krama'-how to fashion out idols and images. In the Agamas the topic of 'Pratima Laxanas' is very important.-The proportion stance and such other aspects of the idol. In the Agama sastra the sculptor is called 'Sthapathi'-shilpi.

The Agamika is called 'Sthapaka'. The shilpi it is not enough if he is just a sculptor and nothing more. He must also be an ardent devotee, an Upasaka.

Even the stone used for making the idol should have certain lakshanas-Even the excellences of the stone to be used for sculptoring the idol are mentioned in detail. For instance under Sila lakshana three classifications are made: Pumsila, Strisila, and Napumsaka sila. Pumsila has the prominent characteristic of giving out the sound and reverberations when struck of the metal bronze. That which gives out the sound of a bell (Ghantanada) is called Strisila. That which does not give any rythmic sound when struck (Tala vihina sila) is said to be Napumsikasila. It is further prescribed that the idols of male deities should be carved out of Pumsila, those of the female deities out of Strisila and the Pedestals, the bases (adhara pitha) for the idols should be made of Napumsakasila.

The idols must be beautiful. They must represent and reveal the Tattvas behind them. This background, the principle and the tattvas are also revealed by the weapons and ornaments held in the hands of the deity and also the bodily posture assumed by the deity (anga vinyasa vaikhari) such as 'Samabhangi', 'Dvibhangi', 'Tribhangi' etc. Apart from the Tribhangyadi murthis there are the other types such as the 'Sthita' murthis the 'Āsana' murthis and the 'Śayana' murthis. The same deity as for instance 'Krishna' may be in different anga, bhangi, vinyasas such as 'Balagopala' Kalinga mardhana or as with Satya Bhama or as Gitacharya etc etc. In Vastus also there are the two types-'Cala' and 'Acala' conforming to certain measurements such as 'Manangula', 'Mantrangula', dehalabdangula and in terms of pancatala, navatala etc. One of the well-known texts dealing with these is the 'Brihat samhita' of Varaha Mihiracharya. Apart from the major details there will be installed so many other minor deities such as the 'Sapta Matrikes, the parivara murthis like Garuda, Anjaneya etc. The idols must be Kalapurna and worthy of worship and meditation-upasana yogya. The agamas

also prescribe the length of time the divinity resides in the images made of sila, mrit, daru, ratna or loha. They also speak of the life time of the temple. The Bharatiya vastu silpa and murta silpa are well known in all the famous places of pilgrimage in India, frequented by both panditas and pamaras, anuraktas and viraktas. Man's mind is easily drawn and held by the beauty of the images in the innumerable shrines, and at least the Saundarya Rasanubhava may be obtained through the Kayaka, Vacika and Manasika means. If the idols are not in conformity to the Agamic standards, however beautiful the idol may be, it is not considered worthy of installation as it cannot yield the desired or required results. It is presumed that the Devata Kala (Sakti) is not present or residing in the idol not made according to Agamic standards and not consecrated properly. A Kalā Vihina Murti is unworshipable. It does not possess the Jivanta Kala-the living force or energy required for the 'anugraha' of the Bhakta. It is said in the agamas that where idols are made, installed and consecrated according to Agama siddhanta and Silpa siddhanta there will be enough life-force to attract the devotees and bless them.

According to the Agamas, if Divinity should reside in the idols three 'Poshanas' are required:

i. The Arcaka-He must be a Sadacara sampanna, a Susikshita and a tapasvi and should also possess the capacity for both nigraha and anugraha-In other words he must be himself a sadhaka and should possess Vākśuddhi.

ii. The idol must be according to the prescribed rules of manufacture as enjoined in the Agamas and must be beautiful. Sarvanga sundara and Pratima lakshana lakshita.

iii. To conduct worship according to the prescribed rules, all the material equipments and offerings, the agamic paraphernalia must be there.

If the above three conditions are satisfied the deity can do 'Bhakta abhīshta varapradāna'-

'Arcakasya tu mahatmyat pujya bimbasya saushtavat,
Pujopakaranascaiva tribhih sannidhyamucyate'-

The Pancaratra agamas are based on the Ekayana sukta of the Yajurveda. Yamunacharya claims it as the Fifth Veda. Appayya Dikshita says that the agamas are as authoritative as the Vedas. So also Harita Maharshi considers the Agamas as on a par with the Vedas. Kalidasa refers to the Agamas in his Raghu Vamsa X-26. Puranas refer to the Agamas. The Devi-Bhagavatha describes the Tantra sastra as a Vedanga. Sandilya was not satisfied with the Vedas and sought more enlightenment from the Agamas. The so-called Brahma-Vidya, are no longer current in practice and exist only in theory. No body nowadays practices the Pancagni vidya, Vaisvanara vidya, Dahara vidya or Akshipurusha vidya or any other though they are discussed in the Vedanta. Such vidyas have been taken over, absorbed or amplified in agamic worship. The agamic mantras such as the Ashtakshara, Dvadasakshara have of late all been added to the vedic mantras in the modern Hindu scheme of religious life. The greatest value of the Agamas consists in taking up the ideas of Vedanta and working them up into fuller synthesis, amalgamation and systematisation. They have stream-lined ancient Hinduism into a compact, convenient and congenial way of worship, adoration, and liberation through God-realisation. Hence it is universally admitted of late that a mere study of the Vedas, the Vedanta and the Darsanas without the Agamas is useless. In the Naradiya section of the Mahabharata it is said the Pancaratra means five topics:

Tattva-Categories,
Mukti-Liberation,
Bhakti-Devotion,
Yoga-Spiritual union,
Vaisseshika-Sense objects:

Thus it is well known that the Agamas, Yamalas and Tantras have not only added to the Vedic Mantras and ceremonials, they

have made supplements to the Vedas in a healthy way and enriched them.

That is why Harita states in his Dharma sestra that Sruti is of two kinds: the Vedic and the Tantric (agamic).

'Srutipramaniko dharmah,
Sritisca dvividha - Vaidiki tantriki ceti'.

The Bhagavadgita, a smruti *par excellence* is called an Upanishad. In it we find the impact of the Bhagavata agamic traditions (just as we find in the Svetasvatara upanishad clear traces of Saivagama). Particularly in post-Vedic literature we find the amalgamation of the nigamas and the agamas, the Smritis, Puranas, Itihasas and a host of other ideas evolved. We find invariably the interplay of the Monism and Monotheism of the Upanishads; the pluralism of the Samkhya and Vaiseshika philosophies, the logic and retionalism of the Naiyayikas and the Triple Tattvas, the three-fold basic tenets of the Tantras. All the Agamas for instance agree in holding that the world is a reality and not an illusion, Mithya (false) or unreal. The argument particularly of the Mayavadins that the material Universe is unreal is invariably absent from the philosophy of the agamas. Bhakti or personal devotion to the Supreme adorable one, to the world mother to and father or to the world-mother or world-father (Dampati or Jagatampati) is another characteristic feature of all the Agamas, whether Saiva, Sakta or Pancaratra. We find the practical ways of realisation, sadhana incorporated in the systems not mere revelations of confused and controversial ideas in the Agamas. Particularly in the Agamas precept and practice, theory and discipline go together. It is not merely a philosophy but a consistent way of life. Bhakti and Prapatti are the main levers of the Agama sadhana. "The root of this attitude of Bhakti to a Supreme being can be traced to that spirit of the Vedic Rishis which made them praise as the highest whatever God high or low they happen to invoke at any time-the spirit which Max Muller has hailed Henotheism. The development of the Agama schools gave a great impetus to Bhakti by concentrating the

attention on one Deva and this resulted in the extreme development of Bhakti. A devotion that expressed itself in an absorbing love-a complete self-surrender. ----- This devotional movement has an in other countries given a great atimulus to art: temple architecture especially in southern India and lyric (devotional) poetry especially Sanskrit, Tamil and Hindi have reached a high order of perfection....Music, dancing (Natya) and gesticulation (abhinaya) have also been evolved under the influence of religious devotion"- P.T. Srinivasa Iyengar.

Idolatry and Temple worship have been a great socialising force in the Indian Sub-continent from times immemorial. Even today in every Indian village the temple has been the hub of all social activities apart from being mainly a spiritual centre. The car festival and so many other weekly, monthly and annual processions of the deity around the main streets, the assemblage of devotees not only regional but also from distant parts, the music, dance and other social festivities all these contribute greatly to social integration, joy and exaltation. The prominent projecting temple tower is itself a reminder to every one outside however far away he may be from the temple precincts of God and an admonition to the humble and modest in one's dealings with fellow-men. Equally true the temple is a great solace and succour to the disappointed and the sorrowful. They can rush in, pray to the God inside and console themselves. The idol in one's own home is the exclusive privilege of the individual. The idol in the temple provides easy access to all irrespective of social hierarchy, profession or sex. It is the temple and the God in the temple duly installed, consecrated and worshipped that is considered to be the best and the most convenient place for any individual to have recourse to prapatti. He can make his absolute surrender of his self before the living presence of God in the Deity. Pillai Lokacharya a great savant of Srivaishnavism states in Sri Vacana Bhushanam (39) :

'Bhugatajalambole antaryamitvam

Āvaranajalambole paratvam,

Pārkadal pole Vyuham,
Perukkaru pole Vibhavangal,
Adiletengina madukkal pole Arcavataram'-

Para is the God of the eternals. It is like the rain drops in the skies. We cannot easily get it. Vyuha is the Lord of the Milky ocean and is difficult to approach. Vibhava is the Lord of the Avatars, chiefly Rama and Krishna. Vibhava is like the occasional freshes of a river. Antaryami is like the spring in the earth, deep inside and difficult to obtain. But Arca is like the water in the tank, very easily and conveniently accessible. It is the true reservoir of Love. God in Arcavatara absolves the repentent of all his sins and bestows His grace on him. All the great Alwars by performing prapatti before Arca forms of God have shown us the way of doing the same.

In Vishnu dharmottara mahapurana, Parasurama puts the question to Shankara:

'Tasya maya sarirasya Vishnoramita tejasam,
Prapnuvan hi katham sthanam nityam akshayamavyayam'

How do the devotees attain entrance into the eternal abode of Vishnu?

Sankara replies:

'Akhanda karino Rama Vishnoramita tejasah,
Prapnuvan hi param sthanam nityamakshayamavyayam'-

The Akhandakaris, the Parama Vishnu bhaktas attain the sannidhi of God.

Who is an Akhandakari?

Sankara answers:

'Pancakalavidhanajnastatkarma karane ratah,
Akhandakari bhavati'.

The Akhandakari is one who worships God according to Pancakala Pujavidhi.

Worship of God in the Arca form either at home or in a temple is the easiest way of realising the Purusharthas including

Moksha-It must be remembered God in Arca form is the guest of man. It is for the host to look after Him and please Him. This guest pleased will in turn bestow all His Grace on man, the host.

Though God is in everyone as Antaryamin, how many can know Him as residing so? Very few yogins can realise Him so. In Arca form God lives amidst men in the image installed, in a palpable form in the temple for all the perceive, adore and worship. Of course in Arca form God lives amidst men as their Guest and under their patronage and protection so to say. As a Guest, He is completely in the hands of His worshippers, as He is Bakta paradhina. But as God He protects them and looks after their day-to-day welfare even if only He is worshipped properly, adored with love and devotion and is pleased with His devotees. God must be assured that devotees feel really humble and absolutely dependent on Him just as He has come down to their midst and resides in the idol completely dependent on the devotees because of His extraordinary kindness and mercy for them. God's love for man is dependent on man's love for God. It is mutual and reciprocal. It is with this presumption that He has announced His promise:

'Ananyascintayanto mam yo janah paryupasate,
Tesham nityabhiyuktanam yogakshemam vahamyaham'-

God bestows His benediction and benefaction on those who surrender to Him absolutely, who have killed their 'AHAM' so to say and who always look to Him for His GRACE.

'Sakrudeva prapannaya tavasmiti ca yacate,
Abhayam sarva bhutebhyo dadami-etadvratam mama'.

God has taken it on Himself as His scared duty to give His protective grace to those who have absolute faith and trust in HIM.

Of course individuals can worship God in their own homes and seek His grace. But how many can do so? As few as those yogins who can realise God in their own hearts of hearts-Many do not have either the time, knowledge, know-how, means or

even initiation to do so. Hence there has been the institution of public temples all over Bharata Khanda from times immemorial. God is invoked and installed in the temple in the heart of every village and town for the benefit of all. The temple is endowed with properties and an assured income to maintain its own establishment in Arcakas and attendants. Daily worships and rituals, Nityotsava, Masotsava, Pakshotsava and every other periodical ceremony according to the Agamas and the Sthalapurana (the traditions of the place) are being conducted strictly and without fail according to the established punctilious. The temple in India has been the nursery of yore of Indian art, architecture, dance, drama, music, literature and philosophy. The temple contains within itself not only the God in a 'living form', it also contains in its sanctum sanctorum the Public Conscience. That is the greatness of Indian Cultural Heritage. Every Indian every moment feels He is living and performing his duties in the living presence of GOD, in God's neighbourhood. He cannot normally even think of evil let alone doing evil. Even the unfortunate bad one day or the other may glance at Him, the ARCA MURTHI when He goes in procession (Utsava) in the town and may be drawn towards Him and follow Him into the temple and into godliness and goodness. The temple-tower, the temple-bells and drums constantly remind men of God at all times wherever they be and in whatever activities they may be engaged. The institution of temples and idolatry has been the Cynosure of Hindu morals, metaphysics and religion.

THE EVOLUTION OF SOUL AND MATTER

IT IS already pointed out that the Vyuhas are the manifestations of Vishnu, the Lord Himself, Para-vasudeva. Samkarshana the first vyuha with His two dominant qualities of Jnana and Bala is said to separate the individual souls from Prakriti. He is said to enter the amorphous mass of Prakriti tattva and separate it from the mass of bound souls. He is then said to assume the form of Pradyumna.

Pradyumna with His two predominant gunas of Aisvarya and Virya is said to perform 'Suddha varga srishti'. Particularly with the help of the guna Aisvarya, Pradyumna is said to create pure beings.

Aniruddha with His two dominant traits of Sakti and Tejas is said to launch forth 'Misravarga srishti'. As Mahavishnu, Aniruddha is responsible for the creation and maintenance of the world. Not only does He set in motion cosmic time (Kala), with His guna tejas He makes possible group of mixed beings (mixed creation).

According to Pancaratra, Samkarshana is 'asesha-bhuvanadhara'-the foundation for the entire gross universe.

Anyway it is from Pradyumna that Prakriti and Purusha are said to emerge directly for the first time. (These two are said to have been in Samkarshana in an amorphous condition). It is Pradyumna that makes possible both 'Manava sarga' and 'Vaidya sarga'-the creation of group soul as also of primordial matter and time.

Again Aniruddha with His dominant assignment of 'Jagadbharana', makes possible the growth of body and mind out of the creation of Pradyumna. Not only is He considered to be

the ruler of the Cosmos, it is He who is said to have evolved manifest matter with gross time and thus brought out about mixed creation (Misra varga ṣrishti).

From the Vyuha and Vibhava proceed Suddhetara srishti-

Bhutih suddhetara vishnoh purusho dvi-caturmayah
Sa manūnām samāhāro Brahma-Kshatradi-bhedinam
Ahirbudhnya Sam. IV.8-9

The power of God is at once one with Him and different from Him. The Lord cannot exist without His power nor can the power exist without Him. These two, the Lord and His power are regarded as the ultimate cause of the world. The manifestations of the Lord that are revealed as Vyuhas and Vibhavas are considered pure (as by meditating on these the yogins attain their desired end). The other manifestation of the Bhuti sakti is 'Suddhetara'-different from the pure. Suddhetara srishti, non-pure creation is of course based on pure creation and is brought about by an infinitesimal portion of the divine energy.

Bhuti sakti of the Lord, power is of two kinds:

(i) Power as activity

(ii) Power as determinants of being or existence (Bhutisakti).

This Bhutisakti may be regarded as a moving idea (Samkalpamayi murthi). The process of activity inherent in it may be regarded as manifesting itself in the form of ideas or concepts actualising themselves as modes of reality.

Suddhetara srishti is of a three-fold character:

(i) Purusha; (ii) Guha; and (iii) Kāla (Time).

Purusha is regarded as a unity or colony of pairs of males and females of the four castes and these four pairs emanate from the mouth, breast, thighs and feet of Pradyumna.

From the forehead, eyebrows and ears of Pradyumna also emanate the subtle casual state of Time and the Gunas-'Sūkshma-kāla-gunāvasthā.

After the emanation of these entities the work of their growth and development was left to Aniruddha who by the fervour of His yoga evolved the original element of Time in its two-fold form as 'Kala' and 'Niyati'.

He also evolved the original energy as Guna into the three forms of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas in succession i.e., the original primordial energy as Guna (called sometimes Prakriti in allied literature) was first evolved into Sattva guna. From it evolved Rajas and from Rajas evolved Tamas.

This original undeveloped Guna produced from Pradyumna (in other words Prakriti) receives impregnation from the fervour of Aniruddha and thereby evolves itself first into Sattva, then into Rajan and then into Tamas.

It is all SATKARYAVADA.

Without this further impregnation from the fervour of Aniruddha, it could not by itself have produced the different gunas of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas.

Antahsthā-purushām śaktim
Tām ādāya sva-murti-gām
Samvardhayati yogena hy
Aniruddhah sva-tejasā

Aniruddha was however directed by Pradyumna not only to develop the unconscious power (Śakti), but also the purusha which exists as it were inside that power. It shows itself as Niyati (destiny) and Kala (time).

From the unconscious power as Destiny and Time, evolves first Sattva. From Sattva evolves Rajas and from Rajas, Tamas. From Tamas, Buddhi evolves, then Ahamkara, from Ahamkara the five Tanmatras and eleven senses, from the five Tanmatras

the gross elements and from the gross elements all things which are the modifications of the gross elements.

In this context it is interesting to note the Visvaksena samhita critises the Vediç people who depended on the Vedic sacrificial rituals and the innumerable Vedic Gods, strived hard for the attainment of Heaven and ultimately fell down from Heaven to the course of mundane life namely Samsara.

Trayī-mārgeshu nishnātāh
Phala-vāde ramanti te
Devādin eva manvānāna ca mām menire param ||
Tamah-prāyās tu ime kecin mama nindām prakurvate |
Samtāpam kurvate vyagram vedavadeshu nishtithāh ||
Mam na jānanti mohena mayi bhakti-parānmukhāh |
Svargādishu ramanty ete avasāne patanti te ||

According to Visvaksena Samhita, Aniruddha created Brahma and Brahma subsequently created all the men and women of the four castes.

The origin and internal evolution of the Brahmanda, the Cosmic egg both in the avyakta and vyakta stages, are referred to in the Brahmanda Kośa (fifth Kosa) and the Jivananda Ko śa (Sixth Kosa) respectively of the Laxmi Tantra VI.23-25. First of all the Tattvas are to be evolved and they should form a compound 'just as a wall cannot be erected with clay, sand and water until they are still unmixed' as said in Tattvatraya. Then the Cosmic egg is to be brought about by a conglomeration of the Tattvas and in the egg Brahman should come into existence. Ahirbudhnya (XXX.8 and XLI. 5-6), Laxmi Tantra (V.74) and Visvaksena Samhita all given an account of it. But the interpretations given in the different tantras about this creation are varied indeed. For instance Padma tantra says that from the navel of Padmanabha there springs a golden egg containing a tattvas in a subtle condition. While the egg is growing, a shining white lotus is said to appear in it. Finally in the lotus Aniruddha

is said to create the four-faced Brahman. Then this four-faced Brahman makes two futile attempts at creation, then meditates for a long time and finally receives from the Purusha the instrument of creation namely the Vedas. At the third attempt He is said to create four youths such as Sanaka etc., the eleven principle Rudras and other minor Rudras and also the six Prajapatis from whom the rest of the entire Universe of 'Cara' and 'Acara' beings is said to descend. Both classes of souls, the pure ones (Suddha varga) and the mixed group (Misra varga) are said to be introduced into the Egg by Aniruddha (Padmanabha), the pure ones introduced directly and the impure ones indirectly later on. Thus it is Brahman, the highest representative of Rajas that is said to have shunted into this earth the impure beings with a lot of 'Vasanas'. The Visvaksena Samhita and the Mahasanatkumara Samhita also endorse the same opinion.

PURUSHA:

The term Purusha in the Pancaratra Samhitas is used in a special sense and not in the ordinary Samkhya sense. Purusha in the Samhitas signifies a colony of souls or selves like the cells in a honey-comb.

Sarvatmanam samashtir ya koso madhukritam iva

Ahirbudhnya, VI-33.

In other words, it is not many Purushas as in Samkhya but only one KUTASTHA or SAMASHTI or COLLECTIVE PURUSHA - 'The Purusha piled up by souls blunted by beginningless germ-impressions (Vasana)'.

These selves are associated with the beginningless 'Vasanas' or root-impressions. They are but the special manifestations (Bhuti-Bhedāh) of God and are said to be in themselves omniscient; but they are permeated by Avidya (ignorance) and the afflictions which are involved in their very nature through the power of God acting in consonance with His thought-movement.

Atmano bhuti-bhedāstē sarvajnah sarvato-mukhāh
Bhagavacchakti-mayaivam mandatīvrādi bhāvayā
Tat-tat-sudarśanonmeshā-nu-kritātmanā
Sarvato-vidyayā viddhāh kleśamayā vastikritāh

Ahir.Bud.Sam.VI.35-36

The KUTASTHA PURUSHA is the SOUL of SOULS. It is the totality regarded as the source of all disembodied but karma-bound souls (non-liberated souls before Creation and even after Dissolution of the non-pure universe).

In conformity with the idea of the Purusha Sukta, the origin of the Kutastha from Pradyumna is described as consisting of four couples-the Male and the Female ancestors of the four castes springing respectively from the mouth, arms, thighs and feet of Pradyumna.

Therefore KUTASTHA is called the PURUSHA of 4 pairs,

- the purusha consisting of twice-four
- the aggregate of Manus
- the Eight Manus
- the Four Manus or
- simply the Manus.

The Manus are considered to be the origin of the Pitris, Devarshis and men.

The Kutastha purusha is explained as

-An aggregate of souls similar to a bee-hive as already averred to.

-Śaktyānānāvidhākāra madhukośanibhātmanā
Nishyandamāna tattvaugha svarūpa madhu viprushā

Ahirbudhnya Sam. IX.25

Again the Kutastha purusha is compared with (the hole of) an udumbra tree swarming with countless bees

-Śuklarakta sitākāra karmakalpita rūpinā

Ancka maśakākīrnodumbara pratimātmanā

Ahirbudhnya Sam. IX.27

It is again referred to as existing in the form of a heap, an aggregate or collection

- Rāśivat sthitah

Vedanta Desika says in this context

Anckeshām santanyāmānānām purushānām

Sādhārano hi pūrvah purushaḥ Kūtasthah

The description of Brahman as consisting of the totality of bound souls.

Lakshmi Tantra refers to the Kutastha purusha in IV.35. The same Tantra defines Purusha (7.11-12) as the

'All-knowing, all-faced BHOKTRI KUTASTHA.-

As His parts go forth from Him, all the eternal souls (Jivas) of forth from Him-

Likewise at the time of Dissolution the work (bound) souls go back to Him, the Highest Soul.

(Note: The liberated souls do not return to Kutastha).

These selves thus rendered impure and finite are called Jivas and it is these Jivas who suffer bondage and strive for salvation, which they of course finally attain.

The Purusha which is made up of these Jivas that are impure, it itself therefore partly impure and hence the Purusha is also regarded as both pure and impure-Suddhi-asuddhimaya-Ahir. Budh. Sam. IV.34.

This Purusha contains within it the germs of all human beings which are called Manus. These Manus are in themselves untouched by afflictions (Kleśa). These Manus are omniscient and impregnated through and through by God. Therefore the

Manu's association with Avidya through the Will of God is external.

(Of course the germ of caste distinctions and distinctions as male and female (sex distinctions) is regarded as primordial and transcendent as in Purusha Sukta).

This distinction of caste is said to exist even in these Manus which are said to be divided in 4 pairs.

It is Avidya that initiates the special movement of thought and through it the individual selves. The individual selves though pure in themselves are besmeared or besmirched with the impurities of root-impressions. These selves remain in the stage of conglomeration or association by the *desire of Vishnu the Lord* and this state of group inherence is called 'Purusha'-(Purusha Pada)

-Vishnoh Samkalparupena sthitvasmin purushe pade
Ahir. Budh. Sam. VI. 41.

They are made to appear and disappear from the nature of God. Being a manifestation of God's own nature they are said to be uncreated eternally existing entities, a part and parcel of His very existence (Bhuti-amsah of God Himself).

In fact, through the motivation or impulse of the thought-activity of God, an energy (Sakti) is said to be generated from Aniruddha. Moved again by the desire of God, the aforesaid Manus descend into this energy and remain there as a developing foetus (Tishṭanti kalalī-bhutāh-Ahir. Budh. Sam., VI.45).

The energy of Vishnu is of a two-fold nature as (i) Dynamic activity (Kriyakhya) and as (ii) Determining being (Bhuti).

'Bhuti', the latter is said to be the result of the former (Kriyakhya).

- Kriyakhyo yoyam unmeshah so bhuti-parivartakah
-Ahir. Budh. Sam. VI.29

This dynamic activity is different from God, the possessor of this energy. This dynamic activity that is different from God is designated variously as: Lakshmi, Desire, Samkalpa or Free Will. - Swatantrya-mula-Icchatma. This will operates as an intellectual visualisation.

Preksha-rūpah Kriyā-phalah.

Once again it is said to produce the other manifestations of God such as Avyakta, Kala and Purusha.

About the disposition of the souls at the time of dissolution it is averred to in the following way in the Samhitas:

When the day of the Lord is over and the great dissolution has taken place, there remains nothing but the waters of infinity spread all over. Floating on these waters there remains a baby on the leaf of a banian tree (Vata patra) and the baby's name is the 'Void', Sunya. This babe is none other than Vishnu, 'the sleepless one sleeping the sleep of yoga'.-

-Yoga nidrām upāgato vinidrosvapad Isvarah.

There then sleep in His Kukshi "Womb" all the souls. In the upper part of the 'womb' lie all the liberated souls (Mukta).

In the middle part lie the 'Mukti-yogya'-those souls qualified for liberation (owing to Sattva prevailing in them). Near the navel (from which will spring the Lotus and the representative of Rajas, God Brahma) there lie all the ones that are ever-bound-Nitya baddha. In the region of the loins those souls that are steeped in darkness (Tamoyogya), the souls called 'Naras' reside (on account of the predominance of Tamas in them)-Also explained in Manu Smrithi-I.10.

The liberated souls will have first joined the Lord; the Para-vasudeva in Vaikuntha. But at the time of the Total great dissolution even when Vaikuntha is withdrawn, they are said to *become latent* in the Lord-*Eki bhavati*. It simply means the liberated souls at the time of the Great Deluge just temporarily reside in God the Almighty. For if the soul is a part of Lakshmi

or a contraction of Lakshmi as the Goddess herself calls it so in Lakshmi tantra IV.36.

-Pramata cetanah prokto, mat samkocah saḥ ucyate.

the liberated soul cannot of course become one with the Lord in the Advaitic sense. It can just be an embrace-a Perfect embrace of the divine couple (Also Ahir. Budh. Sam. Chap. IV) and afterwards they separate again as soon as the time for creation comes.

As the Ahirbudhnya Samhita says

Bahubhih dvandvabhāvaih sāsaktih bhutamayisthitā

Suddhā-suddha vibhāgena cetya cetana rūpatah

there are innumerable references in the different Samhitas to point out that animate and inanimate nature, soul and body, subject and object (cetana-cetya, dehin-deha, bhoktr-bhogya) are the two aspects of parts of the one Bhuti-sakti.

Creation in the Samhitas just means the same things reappearing. (There is hence no question of the birth of souls or 'original sin' in the Pancaratras).

Apart from the three well-known powers of creation, preservation and destruction, the Lord has two more Saktis namely:

1. Nigraha or Tirodhana
2. Anugraha.

With these two powers God can prepare or pre-determine the souls either for bondage or for release.

Apart from the soul entering the wheel of Samsara by its own acts (because of its freedom of will), there is also the factor of the Lord's 'obscuring' its divine nature by reducing its original omnipresence, omniscience and omnipotence so as to make it atomic, knowing little and achieving little. (It is tirodhana). If He wills, by His Anugraha, He can cancel all these limitations.

Whether the above mentioned five Saktis including Nigrah and Anugraha belong to the Lord or to the Devi (Panca Krityan of the Devi-Ahir. Budh. XXI.12) or Lakshmi, this much i certain in the Pancaratras that the individual soul is not regarde as a mere portion of Lakshmi but as a *Third principle* distinct from both Vasudeva and MATTER. There are passages in th Ahir. Budh. Sam. 45/4-8; 38-13 which speak of Avidya or May as veiling the true nature of soul and God (Jiva and Para). Bu the liberated soul is said to be not merely omniscient but als omnipotent and omnipresent (Vibhu) though of the size of mote (trasarenu pramana).

Vishnu Tilaka has said-II.84-85

-There is the Triad here,

Brahman, Jiva, and Jagat
Brahman is a mass (Rasi) of light
Jagat (the world) is a mass of elements (Bhuta)
Jiva (Soul) is a mass of knowledge.

As explained in Yatindramata Dipika and Tattva Traya, th liberated soul though essentially atomic (like the bound one) i omnipresent in the sense that its consciousness is eve omnipresent (Sadā Vibhu). It is said to be analogous to the ligh spread in a room in relation to the lamp or flame from which i radiates. (A good explanation is given of the soul-mote and it million rays in the Ahirbudhnya Sam. 2.27).

In Padma tantra I:4. 14-15, the question is asked:

"What is the difference, Oh Highest spirit, between Thee an the liberated soul?". The answer given is: "They (the liberated become 'I'. There is no difference whatsoever". This does no mean identity of Atman and Brahman as in Advaita because i continues to say: "As I live (Viharāmi) just so live the liberate souls"-definitely emphasising the plurality and individuality o the liberated souls. It may best indicate "They become like MI except of course with regard to the government of the world

Salokya and Sarupya need not mean absorption and identity. Apart from the liberated souls there are the NITYAS with God. How can then the just liberated souls become one with God when even the Nityas are apart from Him?

In Vishnu Tilaka (which runs close to Padma Tantra in many ways) we come across phrases with reference to the liberated souls such as:

"He will become Brahman"-

"Is absorbed in the Highest Brahman" -I. 33 & I. 114

The same Vishnu Tilaka points out that such phrases mean that 'the Union is declared to be one with the Kausthubha of the Lord'-The explanation continues:

"Just as gold in the midst of fire shines separately as though it were not in contact (with the fire), even so he who is clinging to Brahman (Brahmani lagna) is seen to exist in the form of a gem (mani).

-Mani ratne vilagnasya sāyujya gatirucyate -II.54

"He who has become attached to the jewel of gems (Maniratna, Kaustubha) is said to have attained identity with the Lord".

Elsewhere even Padmatantra makes a precise statement as are the plurality and the ultimate separatability of the individual souls:

"Scripture emphasise the oneness of the Highest Self and the One called Kshetrajna (Knower of the field, the Soul); (but) the plurality of this Kshetrajna is proved by the diversity of bodies".

Although three advaitic images are used to illustrate the relation of the One and Many such as

1. The pot in the water
2. The pot in the air
3. The one figure reflected in many mirrors.

(The first two occur in the Maitreya Up. II.18 and the third in the Brahma Bindu Up. With an approximate simile-the one moon and its many reflections in the tank), the central idea is invariably emphasised that God as the Inner Ruler pervades the Soul while He is *of course also outside it.*

"Just as, by means of gates of various kinds, people go forth from a town, even so the souls go forth from Brahman.- This is called creation; and as through the gates the inhabitants of that town enter again, just so the souls go back to that Brahman, this is called withdrawal". Ref . Vishnu Tilaka II.95; Padma Tantra, I.6. 43-44.

Even the Bhagavadgita says:- 'Mamaivamso' XV.7.

There is absolutely no room for Mayavada in the Pancaratras and the soul's individuality is universally underlined.

Along with Purusha there comes into being Māyāśakti, non-spiritual energy, the primitive form of matter, Nature, Prakriti, also called Śakti, Bhagavat Śakti, Mūlaprakriti, Śarvadvidyā or simply vidyā. It bears the same relation to the material universe as does the Kutashta purusha to the world of souls. The Manus are destined to descend into it gradually. 'Niyati', 'Kāla' and 'Guna' are declared to originate from the forehead, eyebrows and ears respectively of Pradyumna.

Sukshma Kāla gunāvasthā sudarsana Samīritā

Pradyumnasya lalāācca bhruvoh karnadudīritā

-Ahir.B.S.VI.12

Having produced the Kutastha Purusha and the three-fold Mayasakti, Pradyumna is said to transfer both of them, 'The Sakti with the Purusha in it' for further development or proliferation, to Aniruddha.

Antahshta purushām Śaktim tāmādāya svamurtigām

Samvardayati yogena hyaniruddhah svatejasā

-Ahir. B.S.VI.14.

Ekādaśakamakshānām matrebhyobhutapancakam
Bhutebhyo bhautikam sarvam iti ayam srishti samgrahah
-Ahir. B.S.VI.18

From Aniruddha, the following are then said to emerge:

From Aniruddha	-	Sakti
From Sakti	-	Niyati
From Niyati	-	Kāla
From Kāla	-	Śattvaguna
From Sattva	-	Rajoguna
From Rajas	-	Tamoguna

Simultaneously, the Manus are said to descend into these Tattvas in the same order and remain there for some time as a foetus (Kalalī-bhūta).

Avatirya svakatsthānādvishnu samkalpacoditāh
Tishtantī kalalibhutastāsmin saktimaye pade -Ahir.VI.45.

Thus Mayasakti, Niyati and Kāla, these three are called the three mothers and creators of the world in Lakshmi Tantra.

Mahalakshmi	-	Maha Sri, Paramesvari, Bhadra Kali, etc.
Mahavidya	-	Mahavani, Sarasvati, Mahadhenu etc.
Maha Kali	-	Mahamāyā, Kālarātri, Nidrā, etc.

They are said to represent the Rajasic, Sattvic and Tamasic aspects of the Goddess. Lakshmi Tantra says they are Aniruddha's wife Rati in the form of the sheath of Maya, 'Mayakosa'.

Niyati is called Mahāvidyāmayi Śaktih, the Sakti consisting of general knowledge. (Ahir. VI. 51). She is said to be 'the subtle regulator of everything'-Sukshmah sarva niyamakah (Ahir.VI.46). (Also referred to in Brih.Ara.Up.III.8.9).

Niyati actually determines the form and contour which is a being may assume, its work, its nature, etc.

-Yasya syādyādriśam rūpam yatkaram yatsvabhāvakam
Sudarsana prabhavastham tattanniyama bhāvitam.
(Ahirbudhnya. Sam. VI.48)

Kāla: Time is defined as 'the mysterious power existing in time which urges on everything. It is the principle which pursues everything to be matured as the stream is after the bank of the river.

-Sopanakramatah kalatadgaunani vyjyate vapuh
Kala is the cooking (maturing) from the time
-Kalasya pacanam rupam.

Strictly speaking three kinds of Time are detailed:

(i) "Effected or gross time which plays no part until after the creation of the Tattvas."
(ii) "Casual or subtle time which though relatively eternal is also created by Aniruddha (Pradyumna)."
(iii) "Higher time existing in pure creation".

The aforesaid kāla tattva emanating from Niyati is said to conform to the second type of kāla as enumerated above namely-the subtle kind of time.

At the time of each creation Vishnu is said associate the Avyakta with the evolutionary tendencies, kāla with the operative moments (Kalana) and the Purusha with all kinds of experience. At the time of dissolution these powers are withdrawn.

By the operation of the supreme energy or will of God (Vishnu-samkalpa-coditah) there spring up from Time Kalasakti, energy and Niyati, the subtle destiny that represents the universal ordering element (Sarvaniyamakatva). Time and guna are said to exist in the womb of sakti. As Niyati is produced from the Time-energy the Manus descend into this category. Kāla (energy) and Guna are co-existing elements in the primordial Sakti of God. This guna potential manifests itself in a course of gradual emergence through time. As the Sattva guna manifests itself from through time, the Manus descend into that category

and later on with the emergence of Rajas from Sattva and of Tamas from Rajas, they descend into Rajas and Tamas also. Once again the emergence of Rajas and from Sattva and of Tamas from Rajas is due to the operation of the Will-activity of God (Vishnu samkalpa coditah). Although Vishnu is considered both imminent and transcendent in all processes, yet Vishnu is regarded as specially presiding over SATTVA

Brahma as specially presiding over RAJAS

Rudra as specially presiding over TAMAS

The guna Tamas is considered 'as heavy (guru), sticky (vishtambhana), delusive (mohana) and also static (appravritiimat). The guna Rajas is considered to be always alert and active, to be on the move invariably and also to be productive of sorrow.

-Tadetatpracalam dukkham rajaśaśvatpravrittimat.

The guna Sattva, on the other hand is described as light, transparent and devoid of impurities or defects and always pleasing.

-Sattvam tatra laghu svaccham gunarupamanamayam.

With the development of the three gunas through the will of God, a part of each one these three gunas attains sameness of character and thus becomes the unity of the three gunas (Traigunya), the equilibrium of the gunas (Gunasāmya). It is also called Avidyā (Ignorance), Nature (Svabhava), Cause (Yoni), the unchangeable and indestructible (Akshara), the causeless (Ayoni) and also the cause as Guna (Guna yoni).

-Amśatah sāmyamāyāti Vishnusamkalpa-coditam.

This kind of participation in equal proportions (Anyūnānatiriktam) of the Gunas in a state of equilibrium (Gunasamyam) is called the *Mula*, the Root (and as Prakriti by Samkya philosophers).

The Manus descending into that category by gradual stages are known by the names:

Samashti	-	(conglomeration)
Purusha Yoni	-	(cause)
Kutastha	-	(unchangeable).

It is the category of time, the transforming activity of the world (Jagatah samprakalanam) that first associates and then dissociates the purusha and prakriti for the production of the effects.

In other words, the three gunas come under the protection of Aniruddha in the form of Trimurtis:

Aniruddha as Vishnu becomes the Superintendent of Sattva

Aniruddha as Brahma becomes the Superintendent of Rajas

Aniruddha as Rudra becomes the Superintendent of Tamas.

These three Gods together with their Saktis (namely Lakshmi, Sarasvati and Gauri) are regarded as the forces underlying the formation of *Avyakta*. They are called in Lakshmi Tantra (VI. 20-21) the sheath of generation-Prasuti kosa.

Lakshmi Tantra also states that the Gunas have originated from an infinitesimal part of the First, Second and Third Gunas of the Lord, namely: Jnana, Aisvarya and Sakti. According to the Ahirbudhnya Sam. the qualities manifested by the three gunas are:

i. Lightness, brightness, healthiness and pleasure.

ii. Motion, passion, restlessness and pain.

iii. Heaviness, obstruction, inertia and stupefaction.

After the Gunas have evolved separately, they become for the purpose of creation, a *uniform mass* called:

Avyakta	-	the non-manifest
Mulaprakriti	-	Root nature

Tamas	-	Darkness meaning undifferentiatedness, Śāntātman with Avyakta as averred to in Katha. Up. III.10-13.
Guna-Sāmya	-	Equality of Gunas - the three gunas equally distributed.
Avidya	-	Ignorance
Svabhava	-	Nature
Akshara	-	The Imperishable
Yoni	-	The womb
Ayoni	-	The unborn
Gunayoni	-	The Guna-made womb.

The trinity of prakriti, purusha and kāla is the basic for the development of all the succeeding categories: In this trinity:

Prakriti - is the evolutionary or the material cause that undergoes transformation.

Payomridadivattatra prakritih parināminī

'Like water or clay prakriti is the material cause.'

Ahir B.S. VII.5.

Purusha - Though unmoved in itself it is that which by its very presence gives the occasion for transformation. Purusha is the unchangeable category that contributes to the causal operation merely by its very contiguity.

Time - Time is the inner dynamic that behaves as the inner synthetic or structural cause.

Pumān apariṇāmī san sannidhānena kāranam

Kālah pacati tattve dve prakritim purusham ca ha.

Ahir.B.S. VII.6

The category of time is the internal dynamic pervading prakriti and purusha. These three causes are not in themselves

sufficient. The Trinity is moved to develop in the evolutionary line by the special activity of God. In other words, it is the thought power of God however that words through the tripartite union of Time, Prakriti and the Manus; and produces all the categories beginning with Mahat to the gross elements of earth, water, etc. Purusha is just regarded as the ADISHTANA karana, KALA as the principle of inner activity and the special activity of God is regarded both as the imminent and the transcendent agent in which the causal trinity of Prakriti, Purusha and Kala finds its fundamental active principle. While the classical Samkhya has only two principles to start with namely Purusha and Prakriti, the Pancaratra samhitas begin with the combined activity of three principles namely Prakriti, Puruṣha and Kala, Matter, Soul and Time. Also it must be remembered that there are not many Purushas as in Samkhya but only one Kutastha or Samashti or Collective Purusha. Of course the mutual relation of the first two is exactly like that of Samkhya, Prakriti changes like milk or clay (changing to curds or pots-Satkaryavada), owing to the proximity (magnetic influence) of the unchangeable purusha.

As the first product of this combined activity of the three (of course by the agency of God) there emerges from AVYAKTA, MAHAT. This first emergent of the tripartite evolution namely Mahat is also called by different names such as:

Vidya	-	
Gow	-	Cow
Avani	-	Earth
Brahmi	-	The cosmic one
Vadhu	-	Woman
Vriddhi	-	Growth
Mati	-	Intellect
Madhu	-	Honey - Brihd.Up.II.5.
Akhyati	-	Non-discrimination

Isvara - Lord
Prajna - Wise
Buddhi - Mandukya Up.

Lakshmi Tantra XVI.2-4 says that Mahat is three-fold in conformity with the three gunas:

Its Tamas element appearing as Kala (Time)
Its Sattva element appearing as Buddhi (Reason, Intellect)
Its Rajas element appearing as Prana (Vitality).

-Samahān nāma tasyāpi vidhās tisrah prakīrtitāh I
Sāttviko buddhir iti ukto, Rājasah, Prāna eva hi II
Tāmasah kala iti uktas; teshām vyākhyām imām srunu I
Buddhir adhyavasayasya prānah prayatnasya ca
Kālah kalanorūpasya pariṇāmasya kāranam-

(Kāla as a form of Mahat is nothing but gross time).

Lakshmi Tantra gives an enigmatical explanation of Mahat. Mahat is called so, as the great one, on account of its comprehending the Lotus, the Male and the Woman.

-Padma-pum-strī-samālambhāt mahatvan tasya śabdyate

The Lotus is identified with Prana (whose quality is SPANDA-Vibration).

The Male is identified with PURUSHA

The Woman is identified with BUDDHI.

In other words, in terms of the predominance or prominence of Tamas, Sattva or Rajas, this category Mahat is typed respectively by the different names of KALA, BUDDHI and PRANA.

-Kalobuddhistathā prāna iti tredhā sa gīyate
Tamah-sattva-rajo bhedat tat-tadunmesha sangnyayā

In other words, the tripartite distinctions of Mahat are:

Kala - Gross time as moments, instants or the like.

Buddhi - The intelligising activity of thought.

Prana - The volitional activity.

Thus the activity implied in both thought and volition seems to be scheduled according to a pre-established harmony in time. In other words the unity of thought and volition is effected through the element of Time, for Time is regarded as the 'Kalana karana', the structural cause.

So Buddhi is not a mere synonym for Mahat as in classical Samkhya. It is only one of its three forms namely the Sattvic one. The individual organ Buddhi is a product of Sattvic Mahat so to say inexactly the same sense as Manas is a product of Sattvic Ahamkara. Mahat in the Samhitas is so to say 'the sub-conscious energy', 'the place of union'-'Ekayana', the Prana to which in dreamless sleep and death all our conscious functions return in order to go forth from it once more on awakening or on rebirth respectively. Mahat in other words is the *Prajna Atman,* the conscious self, embraced by which in dreamless sleep, Sushupti, normally man has no longer any idea of outside or inside. Mahat is therefore the *unconscious* consisting of Intelligence, Vitality and Time.

With the evolution of Mahat, the Manús are said to descend into it.

From Mahat, the sense by which objects are perceived as existent or non-existent, springs.

-Bodhanam nāma vaidyam tadindriyam teshu jāyate

Yenārthān adhyavasyeyuh sadasatpravibhāginah.

Also from Mahat arises Ahamkara by the influence of the spiritual energy of God.

-Vidyayā udare tatrahamkritir nāma jāyate.

This Ahamkara is called also by the names of: Abhimana, Prajāpati, Abhimantā, Boddhā, Ahamkriti etc.

Again Ahamkara is said to be of three kinds:

Vaikarika	-	Sattvic form of the Ahamkara
Taijasa	-	Rajasic form of the Ahamkara
Bhutadi	-	Tamasic form of the Ahamkara

In accordance with the respective predominance of Sattva, Rajas or Tamas. Ahamkara generally manifests itself as-Will, Anger, Greed, Mind (Manas) or Desire (Trisha).

When Ahamkara is produced, the Manus promptly descend into it.

From Ahamkara there is then produced the *organ of thinking* of the Manus namely MANAS-(Cintatmakam indriyam). MANAS is declared a direct product of the Vaikarika.

It is at this stage of development of Ahamkara and Manas, that the Manus first become thinking entities.

From Ahamkara the Manus further receive theTen Indriyas- Five of knowledge and Five of Action.

In the Ahirbudhnya Samitha the subsequent evolutions are traced as follows:

From the Tamas side of Ahamkara as Bhutadi there is produced the sabda-tanmatra from which again Akasa is produced. Akasa is associated with the quality of sabda and gives room for all things. Akasa is thus to be regarded as unoccupied space associated with the quality of śound.

'Sadbaika gunam ākāśam avakāśa pradāyī ca.'

With the emergence of Akasa, the Manus descend into it.

From the Vaikarika Ahamkara there spring the organs of hearing and of speech.

'Tadāvaikarikāt punah srotram vāg iti vijnāna-karmendriya-yugam mune'.

The Manus at this stage become associated with these senses. Then from the Bhutadi, by the special desire of God the touch-potential is produced and from this touch potential, air, vāyu is produced.

By the special desire of God the sense organ of touch and the active organ of the hands are produced from the Vaikarika Ahamkara.

At this stage the Manus become associated with these two receptive and active senses.

From the Bhutadi there is then produced the light-heat potential, from which again the gross light-heat is produced.

Again from the Vaikarika Ahamkara, the visual organ and the active organ of the feet are produced and the Manus are associated with them.

From the Bhutadi the taste-potential is produced and from this taste-potential is produced water.

From the Vaikarika Ahamkara there is produced the taste organ and the sex organ and the Manus are associated with them.

From the Buddhi there is produced the odour potential and from it the earth.

Also from the Vaikarika Ahamkara there arises the cognitive sense of smelling and the active sense-secretion.

The Manus at this stage descend into the category through the special creative desire of God.

-Jayante rasanāvantah pum strī vyanjanā bheditāh
Sudarsanacritāttasmādbhutadestadanantaram

Jayante gandhatanmatran tasmadgandhavati mahī
Katinyam gauravam sthairyamityadyah parthivā gunāh

Vaikarikadahamkarat sudarsana samīritāt
Ghrānam pāyuriti dvandvm jāyate drukkriyatmakam.

Thus it can be easily and clearly observed that with the development of each category of matter, there arise one active sense and one cognitive sense together.

Hence with the final development of all the categories of matter there develop all the ten indriyas, congnitive and conative in pairs.

When the dissolution of the categories take place, we can observe that with the dissolution of each category of matter a pair of senses is also dissolved.

This obviously implies that at each stage there is a co-operation of the material categories and the cognitive and conative senses.

Again, the selves descend into the different categories as they develop in the progressive order of evolution.

The selves having been associated with the evolution of the categories from the beginning they may also easily associate themselves with the senses and the objects of the senses.

Thus when all the categories of matter and the ten indriyas cognitive and conative are developed, the functions of imagination, the energy of will and the five pranas are evolved from Ahamkara, Manus and Buddhi. By these developments, all the elements that are required to form the concrete personality are produced thus:

-Samkalpāscaiva samrambhah prānāh pancavidhāstathā
Manasohamkriter buddher jāyante purvam eva tu
Evam sampurna-sarvāngāh prānāpānādi samyutāḥ
Sarvendriya-yutāstatra dehino manávo mune VII.43.

Thus to summarise:

Bhutadi in association with Taijasa Ahamkara produces successively the five tanmatras of Sabda, Sparsha, Rupa, Rasa and Gandha. From each one of the five tanmatras in the same order are produced the panca bhutas of Akasa, Vaya, Tejas,

Apah and Prithvi. Again in association of Taijasa with Vaikarika Ahamkara there are produced the five cognitive and five conative senses.

Ahamkara

Bhutadi	Taijasa	Vaikarika	
Tanmatras	Bhutas	Jnanendriya	Karmendriya
Sadba	Akasa	Srotra	Vac
Sparsha	Vayu	Tvac	Pani
Rupa	Tejas	Cakshus	Pada
Rasa	Apah	Rasana	Upastha
Gandha	Prithivi	Gharna	Payu

The Manus entering successively the five elements are furnished at each of these steps with one sensory and one motor faculty. Thus the equipment of the Manus herewith is complete. (At the time of dissolution the order followed in the process of development is just reversed).

These Manus establishing themselves on earth thus and resembling the back of a tortoise (Kurma prishtasamanayam bhuvi tishtanti vai mune-IV.14), under the protection of Aniruddha and by His command begin to multiply. Each of the 4 pairs generates a hundred descendants. Subsequently a numberless manavas (aparimitah) are thus produced. The Manavas in turn produce many other children called New Manavas, the new men in all the 4 castes. Among these, those who perform their work for a hundred years with true discriminative knowledge are said to enter into the supreme person of Hari. However those who perform their Karmas with motives of reaping their effects pass through re-births in conformity with their deeds.

The Manus may thus be regarded as the individual forms of the original KUTASTHA PURUSHA. All the Jivas are thus but parts of Vishnu's own self-realising being (Bhuty-amsa).

Prakriti, in the highest sense called Bhuti sakti, also called VIDYA is conceived as a cow in the form of a cloud. At the time of creation Prakriti manifests itself as showering clouds and produces the food grains. In other words the milk called VARSHA proceeding from the cow becomes food. The souls in fact are ultimately said to eat of that milk of nature (Material milk-Vaidyam Payah). By actually consuming this food as produced by Vidya, their unlimited knowledge becomes limited, obscured. There then thus ensues the fall of man, his fall from the original state of perfect knowledge

Tat tu vaidyam payah prasya sarve manava-manavah
Jnana bhramsam prapadyante sarvajnah svata eva te

VII. 61-62

Then religion becomes necessary for these fallen men to regain their original purity. Actually at this stage, the original Manus produce the scriptures for the guidance of these men fallen from their original omniscience. (Similar to the fall of man with the Jewish Christian doctrine). It is said that with the help of the scriptures these men are assured of reattaining their highest goal, their original lost status. Thus there is nothing whatsoever outside the sphere of the Sudarsana Sakti of the Lord. The power of Vishnu as consciousness, bliss and action reveals itself in two ways:

i. As Bhāvaka- It is the thought activity of the Lord.

ii. As Bhāvya-It is part of Him which manifests itself as the object of this activity.

THUS, THE TATTVA-TRAYA IN THE PANCARATRAS - SOUL, MATTER AND GOD

(Prameya and Pramāṇa Nirupana) Ontological and Epistemological Considerations

CITTATTVA

Atman, the individual soul is called 'CIT'-the Rational Being. It is essentially a Substance, a DRAVYA. Atman is innumerable in number and is said to reside even in microscopic organisms.

i. CIT, the Atman, the soul or self is different from Deha (the body in which it resides), Indriya, Manus, Prana, Buddhi and Dharmabhutajnana.

ii. It is 'AJADA', a self-luminous substance. It reveals itself without the help of any external factor.

Ātmā jnānamayah

Vijnanā ghanah

In other words it is not like a Jada vastu that requires the external aid of an indriya or jnana to be known.

iii. It is 'Ananda Svarupa'. It is essentially of the nature of Bliss, beatific delight. As it is primarily 'Śuddathma svarupa' or 'Sukha svarupa', there is absolutely no sorrow in its essential inner nature.

Jnanānandamaya stvātmā

Jnananandaika lakshnanam

iv. Atman is 'Nitya'. Like Paramatman it is eternal and indestructible, 'nāśa rahita' and 'śāśvata'. The so-called birth of an individual, Janana simply means Atman being cloaked with a body. So also the so-called death of an individual, Marana means 'Sarira viyoga', the Atman being undressed of its 'Sarira', material body, sthula sarira.

(After the death of the body the Jiva assumes 'Sukshma Sarira' discarding the Sthula Sarira. It will have a subtle body with all the appertunances of Buddhi, Manus, the 10 indriyas etc., travels to Heaven and Hell to experience the fruits of its deeds Punya and Papa and finally returns to earth to put on a new gross body, a sthula sarira in terms of its karma. Even at the time of the periodical cosmic pralaya it will be in the womb of God in aṇusvarupa, in an atomic form. Again at the time of next srishti it assumes a new body. Even when liberated from bondage, when the soul attains Moksha it assumes a Sattvamaya, Divya Sarira, attains all the Ashta gunas similar to God in a way and remains with Him for ever in His service. In other words there is no 'Nāśa' for Atman according to the Samhitas and also there is no time when the soul is undressed. It is always cloaked either in a gross body or a subtle body or a body made of Sudda Sattva only).

'Na jayate mriyate vā kādacit'
'Ajo nityaḥ nityonityanam'.

v. Another essential trait of the soul is its 'Aṇu Svarupa.' It is atomic in size.

'Esho aṇurātmā cetasā veditavyayah'

'Svarupam aṇumātram ayāt jnānānnadaika lakshanam'

If Atman is not atomic in size it would be inconceivable for it to reside in an imperceptible way in the body, make an elusive exit at the time of utkranti from Sarira, travel over different regions and also re-enter the earth to assume a new gross body- All such adventures are not possible for the soul if it is of the

nature of 'Vibhu' (Advaitins characterising the Atman as Vibhu is inconceivable and Sruti viruddha too). Its size is described as of the one-hundredth part of a hundredth division of the point of a paddy grain.

Valāgra śatabhāgasya
Śatadha kalpitasya ca
Bhāgo Jīvassamvijneyah-

Though atomic in size and lodged in the inner recesses of the heart, it can know and experience everything that takes place in any part of the body because of its Dharmabhutajnana. A lamp though placed in a corner of the room, can illuminate the entire room and all its environs. So also the soul's capacity to know and experience.

vi. This Atman is imperceptible to the Indriyas-(Agocara). It is not like a ghata or pata. It is AVYAKTA.

vii. It is also 'ACINTYA'. We cannot understand it or know it as a 'Vastu'.

'Avyaktoyam Acintyoyam'

It is incomprehensible.

viii. It is 'NIRAVAYAVA'-It is an individual substance Sui-generis, not compounded of parts.

ix. It is 'NIRVIKARA'-impervious to all change or mutations. It is immutable. It is invariably of the nature of 'Ekarupa' without the changes or effects of 'Deśa' and 'Kāla'.

Amritaksharam harah
Atmasuddho aksharah.

It cannot be mutilated or destroyed by weapons; it cannot be soaked by water or burnt by fire-

Acchadyoyam adahyoyam akledyo asoshya eva ca,
Nityah sarvagatah stthanuh acaloyam sanatanah.

x. Atman is Jñānāśraya-the seat of knowledge or intelligence. Of course Atman is Jnanasvarupa as the Srutivakyas say-Vijnanamayah; Vignana ghanah; but he is not knowledge itself. Jnana itself is not his Svarupa. By Jnana is meant Dharmabhuta jnana. Atman is the refuge for Jnana.

xi. Atman is JÑĀTĀ, KARTĀ and BHOKTĀ-He is the knower, doer in the sense of being responsible for his actions and also the experiencer of the results of his actions.

Some schools of thought say that Atman has no 'Kartritva' and that it is only the Gunas of Prakriti namely Sattva, Rajas and Thamas that are responsible for Kartritva. It is wrong. Acetana Prakriti cannot have Kartritva. Kartritva is a Cetana Dharma.

xii. Atman is NIYAMYA to ISVARA-Atman conducts all his Vyaparas, activities in obedience to Isvara Samkalpa. In other words Soul is always subject to God's control (NIYĀMYA).

Ya Ātmani tishtan ātmanontaroyamatmā naveda

Yasyātmā śarīram-

God as Antarymin resides in each Atman without his knowledge-As the individual's body is in every way subordinate to the Jivatma, so also Atman itself as the body or Sarira for Paramatman, is in every way subservient to Him.

xiii. Atman is DHARYA-Sustained by God Himself. Isvara is inside and outside of everything Cit and Acit and hence the 'Soul-essence' is sustainable (Dharya), only by Divine support. But for the Divine Essence and Will, the Soul-essence is subject to cessation.

xiv. Finally Atman is 'ŚESHA', is at the disposal of God and for His own purposes and pleasure.

As is his own body for the individual Atman, so also is the Atman itself for the use of God. Atman is 'Śeshabhuta' to 'Isvara' -

and is 'Viniyogārha' as per His desire. Atman is not for itself; it is for God.

Krishna in the Gita says-Buhmih apo analo.... (VII.4) Acetana prakriti is my body, continuing-'Apareya-mitastvanyām...' (VII.5) He says Jiva also is my Sarira (body). Like Acetana, Cetana also is 'sarirabhuta' for God...

In fact Sribhashya states-'That which is Dharya, Niyamya and Sesha'-is the Sarira-

In fact the entire Universe of Soul and matter forms the body, Sarira of God-

Souls are innumerable entities, 'Ajada Dravyas'.

They are plural in number and beyond enumeration. They are of three classes:

i. The Baddhas-Souls in bondage,

ii. The Muktas-Souls released from bondage,

iii. The Nityas-The Eternals, the Ever-free souls.

I. BADDHATMAS:

These are the 'Samsarins', those who roll on the wheel of time with their impure bodies. They are entangled in the cycle of births and deaths and deluded by the prakriti of the tripartite gunas namely Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. All their endeavours are for the earning of either merit (punya) or de-merit digest them accordingly, again earn again digest and thus get themselves entangled in the re-current cycle of Samsara. We the human beings are the best illustrations of Baddhatmas with all our egoities and egocentricities, love and hate (Raga and Dvesha) deeply absorbed in the pleasures of the senses and affairs of the this-worldly and even other worldly (in the sense of Svarga and Naraka) states. The Baddhas like to die and die to be re-born mistaking the body for the soul and pleasures of the senses for happiness and bliss. It is not merely 'WE' the human beings that are the Baddhas, even the Devatas and the Heavenly bodies are

so. In fact all the Yogis like Sanaka, the Devarshis like Narada, the Brahmarshis like the Saptarishis, Rudra, the Nava Prajapatis, all the Devatas, the Dikpalakas, the 14 Indras, the 14 Manus, the Pitris, the Siddhas, Gandharvas, Kinnaras, Kimpurushas, Vidyadharas, the Ashta Vasus, the Ekadasa Rudras, the Dvadasa Adityas, the Asvini Devatas, the Asuras, Daityas, Danavas, Yakshas, Rakshasas, Pisacas, Guhyakas-all these are Baddhatmas only. All the Manavas of the 4 classes Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Sudra are so. Even the animals, birds, reptiles, insects, worms and germs, the plants, creepers, grass and trees, come under the class of Baddhatmas. (Amongst these Baddhatmas interchange of class and position is always possible. There is no guarantee that man continues to be man only in successive births. His Karma may make him be re-born a four-legged beast if not an insect or a plant even). So also he can aspire to become an Indra or a Devarshi.

Amongst the Baddhatmas, there are the BUBHUKSHUS and the MUMUKSHUS-These who follow just the 3 Purusharthas of Dharma, Artha and Kama are the Bubhukshus. Amongst these Bubhukshus there may be Nastikas, Dharmaparas such as the worshippers of Agni, Rudra, Brahma, etc., the Devatantaraparas and also the Bhagavatparas such as the Artha, Jijnasu, Artharthi, Jnani etc.

The Mumukshus are those bound souls whose only ambition is to get released from the cycle of births and deaths. They want liberation, Moksha. Once again two classes of Mumukshus are distinguished: The Kevalins and the Mokshaparas. It is said those who are after KAIVALYA have no Punaravritti-It means they will have stepped out of the cycle of Samsara and achieved Self-realisation within themselves. Unfortunately the Kaivalyaparas will not have reached the vicinity of God and experienced His Glory. Those who are truly Mokshaparas, they want to go to God and be there with Him for ever in His service. Even among the sincere Mumukshus, a distinction is made between Bhaktas and Prapannas. Some are of the opinion that

only the first three classes of men can be Bhaktas. Also they distinguish between two types of Bhakti-SADHANA BHAKTI and SADHYA BHAKTI. Vyasa Maharshis and such others are called Sadhanabhakti-nishtas. Nathamuni and others Sadhyabhakti-nishtas. On the other hand there does not seem to be any restriction for anyone to be a Prapanna-While Bhakti is considered difficult, Prapatti, absolute self-surrender to the Will of God and God alone, seems to be easy, provided one has Mahavisvasa, absolute faith and trust. Amongst the Prapannas once again a distinction is made between two types of Prapannas namely-

(1) DRIPTA Prapannas,

(2) ĀRTA Prapannas.

The Dripta Prapannas are those who afford to wait for all their prarabda karmas to exhaust themselves and then seek shelter in God's lotus-feet at the time of discarding the mortal coil. The Ārta Prapannas, the moment they surrender to God heart and soul want the ejection of the mortal coil, release from the cycle of births and deaths and shelter in God's holy abode Vaikunta and in His immediate presence.

II. THE MUKTAS:

These are souls who were once entangled in the cycle of Samsara, abstained from the pleasures of the senses, obtained a right Acarya, got enlightened and initiated, made Prapatti to God, got all their Karmas singed, left the body, travelled by the Arciradi Marga, bathed in the Viraja, assumed an Aprakrita Divya sarira entered Vaikunta (called Sakshat Paramapada) and then reached SRIMAN NARAYANA's presence. These freed souls will for ever be in the Nitya Kainkarya, service of God always enjoying the Bliss and Ananda of PARAMASAMYA. The Muktas 'SĀMYA' consists only in the enjoyment of Bliss, Ananda. He cannot have any hand in the God's administration nor can he in any way delve into God's other affairs such as Srishti etc. However by God's will and command he can assume

any type of a body, move about in any region just to serve and please Him.

III. THE NITYAS:

These souls belong to the category of 'DIVYASURIS'. They never had any diminution of their original innate Jnana-They never had any association with Samsara or with Karma. They have always been with God in Paramapada and ever in His service. They have like God the inherent capacity and will to incarnate on earth and participate in the activities of Divine Descensions. They are;

i. ŚESHA, the archangel of wisdom and minister of all Service.

ii. ŚESHĀSANA (literally the punctual eater of consecrated food according to our Temple Ritual)-the Commander-in-Chief of the Lord of Hosts; also said to be the Chief of God's Executive - God's Viceroy for the Administration of the Universe-He is usually known by the title of VIŚVAKSENA.

iii. GARUDA : the loving companion and servant of God.

ACIT TATTVA

MATTER, Acit is defined as that which is devoid of intelligence, Jnana and always subject to changes- (Jnana-sunya and Vikarāspada). It is substance all right, but is characterised as Inert substance (Jada Dravya). It is meant to be the object of experience and enjoyment for souls.

This category of matter, Acit, is said to be of three kinds:

I. Suddha Sattva-Pure substance-the substratum of pure quality only, Suddha sattva, consisting of all Sattva Guna only without even a tinge of Rajas or Tamas.

II. Misra Sattva-Mixed substance-that which is the seat of three qualities of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas.

III. Sattva Sunya-That which is devoid of any of these three qualities of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas.

I. SUDDHA SATTVA:

It is the substratum of the quality of purity alone without the vestiges of any other quality. It is said to be eternal (Nitya), without beginning or end in time. It is productive of Knowledge and Bliss (Suddhasattva sukhakare). It takes shape according to the Will of God and God alone and for the sake of God only in Vaikunta and other places in the form of temples, gateways, halls, etc. Unlike the mixed substance with its 24 sub-divisions that evolves the various objects according to the Law of Karma for the sake of the Souls of course as ordained by God.

'Tad akshare parame vyoman'

In that eternal highest Heaven-Taitt.Up. 2.2.12.

'Devanam pur A-Yodhya'

Unassailable is the city of the Angels-Aitt.Aran.

'A-Parajita pur Brahmanah'

Un-conquered is the city of God-Chan.Up. 8.5.3.

'Prajapates sabham vesma prapadye'

I shall reach the palace where the Lord of Creatures holds His court-Chan.Up. 8.14.1.

Suddha sattva is said to be infinitely bright-

'Na tatra Suryo bhati, na Chandra tarakam'

There, this Sun, this Moon, these Stars, all dwindle into insignificance-

Suddha Sattva is called Nitya Vibhuti Dravya, a Dravya *par excellence* that is different even from that region which is divested of all Karma and Avidya deeply seeped in Punya and Papa. Again Nitya Vibhuti is a self-luminous Dravya that is different even from Jnana and Jnanasraya. It is outside Leelavibhuti and the most extraordinary substance as it has both Sattvaguna and Svayam prakasatva. It is absolutely different from Triguna Dravya has pure Sattvaguna without Rajoguna-has pure Sattvaguna without Tamoguna (It is unlike Kala which has neither Sattvaguna nor Svayamprakasatva).

Pādosya Visvabhutani Tripadasya Amrutam Devi-

All the Brahmandas together compare with only a dot in Lord's Aisvarya. It is presumed God possesses three times this Aisvarya in PARAMAPADA-

'Aditya Varnam tamasah parastāt'-

Pointing to a resplendent Divya mangala vigraha made of Aprakrita Suddha sattva, different from Prakriti Tattva and of brilliant lustre like that of the Sun.

'Teha nakam mahimanah sacante'-

An Aprakrita sthana namely Paramapada called by the term NAKA-where Nitya Suris reside-

'Yatra Purve Sādhyāssanti Devāh'-

'Kshayantamasya Rajasah Parāke'-

That God lives in Paramapada that is different from Prakritimandala of Rajas-

'Tamasastu Pāre

'Tamasah Parastāt

'Pancaśaktimaye divye suddhasattve sukhākare

'Yo asyādhyakshah parame Vyoman

'Tadakshare parame Vyoman

'Sahasra sthune vimite dhrudha ugre yatra devānām adhideva āste'-

God, the master of the Nitya Suris resides in a thousand pillared Mani Mantapa situated in a vast expanse that is beyond Srishti and Pralaya, that is a veritable Ugra region inaccessible to the Un-godly.

'Hiranmaye Pare Kose Virajam Brahma Nishkalam,

Tacchubhram Jyotishām jyothih'-

God devoid of inferior qualities, unconstituted of a Karmakrita body, absolutely constituted of pure Sattva, devoid of all changes (Nirvikara) with the appellation of Para-Brahman resides in a Suddhasattva region that is ever bright and resplendent like gold.

'Yathā pādodarastvacā Vinirmucyate evam naiva sa pāmpanā

Vinirmuktassasāmabhīrunmiyate Brahma lokam'-

Just as a snake gets rid of the thin white outer tissue of skin, so also the devotee of God who has got rid of the investing membrane of Karma will be led to the Brahma loka of Nitya-Vibhuti by the Divya purushas in Sāmagāna.

'Vijnān asārathiryastu manah

Pragrahāvān Narah

Sah adhvanah pāram āpnoti
Tad Vishnoḥ Paramam Padam'-

A self-disciplined God-loving soul will finally reach Paramapada sthana the abode of Vishnu.

'Sa khalvevam vartayan yāvadāyusham Brahmaloka-mabhisampadyate na ca punarāvartate na ca punarāvartate'-

Having reached that Brahmaloka of Suddhasattva, the God-loving soul never returns to Samsara, never to Lila Vibhuti,

Even in Gita it is stated:

'Ābrahma bhuvanāllokāh punarāvartinorjuna,
Māmupetya tu Kaunteya Punarjanma na vidyate'-
'Yadekamavyaktamanantarūpam Visvam puranām tamasah parastāt'-

The Nityavibhuti region, the eternal pure region- with its parks, lakes, gopurams and mantapas that is beyond Prakritimandala of Tamas-

'Ramyāni kāmacārāni vimānāni sabhāstathā-
Ākrīdā vividhā Rājan Padminyascāmalodakāh'
'Etevai nirayā-stāta sthanasya paramātmanah,
Divyam sthanamajaram cāprameyam
Durvijneyam Cā-gamairgamyamānam,
Gaccaprabho raksha cāsmān prapannān,
Kalpe kalpe jāyamanah svamūrtyā'.

Oh, God Sriyahpati you have realised your purpose of the Avatar by destroying the wicked and protecting the good and also by re-establishing Dharma. Please return to your Divyasthana known as Tripadvibhuti! Please descend into our midst in every Kalpa like this with your Divyamangala Vigraha and protect us the absolute believers.

'Devāsca yanna paśyanti divyam tejomayam param,

Ȧtyarkānaladīptam tat sthānam Vishnormahātmanah'-

'Svayaiva prabhayā Rājan dushpreksham Devadanavaih'

The bright Aprākrita divyasthana is Vishnu sthāna. It is TRIPĀDASYAMRUTAM DIVI - Padosya Visva bhutani - Tripadasyamrutam Divi-

'Tatranandamayā bhogā lokāscānandalakshanāh'-

'Tayornau Paramavyoma nirdvandam sukhamuttaman'-

Unlike Trigunadravya which limits Jnana, Nityavibhuti exhilarates the great Six Gunas of God- Jnana, Śakti, Bala, Aisvarya, Virya and Tejas. It is clearly and categorically stated in the Samhitas that apart from God of the Vaikunta region, even the consecrated images of God installed are constituted of Suddha sattva substance. The bodies of Nityas are also made of Nityavibhuti dravya. It is believed in the Samhitas that the Muktas also do have Sariras and Indriyas made of Suddhasattva material.

There is some controversy in the scriptures whether Muktas, the released souls do possess bodies and Indriyas. For instance according to Badari maharshi - Released souls do not have bodies and Indriyas-

Abhavam Bādarirāha hyevam-

According to Jaimini school of thought they do have Sarira and Indriyas.

Bhāvam Jaiminirvikalpāmananāt-

According to Vyasa Maharshi the Muktas can assume body when they like; do not have it when they didn't will to have it-

Dvādasāhavadhubhayavidam Bādarayano ataḥ-

Parāśarabhatta comes to the conclusion that all the Nityas and Muktas do have Sariras and Indriyas by pointing out the following Sruti vakyas:

'Manasaitān Kāmān Paśyan ramate'-

'Manaso asya divyam cakshuh'

'So anyam kāmam manasādhyāyita'-

'Manasaiva Jagatsrishtam'.

Thus it is well established by so much of Sabdapramana that there is Nityavibhuti.

Nityavibhuti is an Ajada Dravya by name PARĀK constituted of Suddhasattva. It is established by the Sastras that this Nityavibhuti is unlimited at the summit and limited at bottom, and that it is Pancopanishadatma and Pancasaktimaya. It is said by God's samkalpa it is meant to provide objects instruments and locale for the bhoga of God, the Nityas and the Muktas. As the buildings flowers and the layouts in Paramapada, are all of Suddha sattva and as the bodies of all the denizens of Paramapada along with their ornaments and weapons are also made of Suddha sattva material they are all deemed as Nityavibhuti. The body of God in all His manifestations as Para, Vyuha, Vibhava and Arcā are also of Suddhasattva material.

(For instance in God's Divyamangala Vigraha, Jivatma is given the form of Kaustubha, Prakriti the form of Srivatsa, Mahattatva the form of Gadha, Sattvikahamkara SAMKHA, Tamasahamkara ŚĀRNGA, Jnana KHADGA, Ajnana its Scabbard, Manas CAKRA, Jnanendriyas and Karmendriyas ŚARA and Sukshma Sthulabhutas the form of Vanamala.)

Nityavibhuti is spread over four regions-Amoda, Pramoda, Sammoda, and Vaikunta. Nityavibhuti is given different titles such as:

Tripadvibhuti, Paramapada, Paravyoma, Paramākāśa, Amruta Nāka, Aprākritaloka, Ānandaloka, Vaikunta, Ayodhyā etc.

God Narayana the Supreme, often referred to as PARAM Tattva, PARAM Brahma and PARAM Jyoti with all His ornaments and weapons and accompanied by SRI, BHU and NILA gives audience to the Nityas and Muktas in Vaikunta in the region of Nityavibhuti, seated on a throne (with Adisesha for a cushion) in a Manimantapa with His left foot forward and the right held back (Savvyam Padam prasarya). God is reported to have Caturbhuja-4 shoulders.

II. MISRA SATTVA:

Is that type of substance which has an admixture of all the three Gunas Sattva, Rajas and Tamas in an imbalance of course. In the different objects of the Misra Sattva type, there will be the predominance of a particular Guna according to the nature of the object and the purpose for which it is meant. For instance, in one there may be the predominance of Rajas, in another of Tamas, in a still another of Sattva, Misra sattva is also eternal. In Srishti it may be in an overt form and during Pralaya in a Covert form. As Misra sattva is a necessary component, aid and instrument in God's creative and sustaining activities and a 'Must' for God's Leela vibhuti, it cannot but be eternal. One of its major traits is the limiting if not inhibiting capacity of the Bound souls (Baddhas) knowledge. It deludes the average souls and causes perverted and stunted knowledge (Viparita Jnana) in them such as mistaking the body for the soul, thinking of oneself as not dependent on God, confusing the Supreme Narayana with the minor deities and confounding with the means or ways of self-realisation and God-realisation.

As this substance Misra sattva is primordial to Mahat which is the seat of all change and mutations, it is called 'Seed-matter' 'Mula-prakriti' or simply Prakriti.

As it deludes the average souls and serves to be-little their innate knowledge and Ananda, it is called 'Avidya'.

As it is capable of extraordinary proliferation into the vast variety of material objects in the Universe, it is called the

'Wondrous' - MĀYĀ - (referring to this vast panorama of the material universe).

This Misra sattva as Mula Prakriti is said to have evolved into the twenty three categories and with Prakriti as included to begin with, there are said to be the 'Famous 24 Tattvas':-

MULA PRAKRITI	-	1
MAHAT	-	1
AHAMKARA	-	1
PANCA TANMATRAS (The subtle elements)	-	5
JNANENDRIYANI (The five sense organs)	-	5
KARMEŃDRIYANI (The five motor organs)	-	5
MANAS (The inward organ ruling sense and act)	-	1
PANCA BHUTAS (The five gross elements)	-	5
Grand Total		24 TATTVAS.

This seed-matter, Mula Prakriti has itself its regressive chain-Before its efflorescence into the Mahattatva, Prakriti is said to be in its 'AVYAKTA State'. It is also called them PRADHANA. The state antecedent to this 'Avyakta' state is called 'AKSHARA AVASTHA'. The state prior to AKSHARA state is called 'VIBHAKTA TAMAS'. The state still prior toVibhakta Tamas is called 'AVIBHAKTA TAMAS'. These different latent and patent states of Prakriti are compared to the different stages of a seed.

The seed as sown and still hidden in the soil compares with the state of Avibhakta Tamas. As shot out of the soil and still in

an ungerminated stage is compared to the state of Vibhak Tamas. The stage of sprouting, budding is akin to the Aksha stage.

The fully germinated stage is said to be comparable to tl Avyakta state. The seedling obviously expresses the state of tl Mahattatva.

So at the time of God's creation, Srishti, from Avibhakı Tamas emanates Vibhakta Tamas. Vibhakta Tamas the transforms itself into Akshara - Akshara manifests itself a Avyakta and Avyakta gradually evolves into Mahat.

At the time of dissolution there will be a correspondin regression and re-absorption. The Mahat is retracted int Avyakta-

> Avyaktam Akshare līyate,
> Aksharam Tamasi līyate,
> Tamah Paredeva ekibhavati.

Avyakta is reabsorbed into Akshara. Akshara relapses int Vibhakta Tamas. Vibhakta Tamas recoils into Avibhakt Tamas. Avibhakta Tamas is finally restored back into God.

From the inequilibrium of three Gunas in Prakriti, Mahat i shot out - 'Mahānvai Buddhi Lakshanam' - Mahat is also callec Buddhi. Mahat is of three varieties, Sattvic, Rajasic anc Tamasic.

From Mahat is again evolved Ahamkara - that is once agair of three varieties - Sattvikāhamkara, Rajasāhamkara and Tamasāhamkara.

From Sattvikahamkara, the ten Indriyas of knowing and action are produced and also the Manas - (Often referred to as the 'Eleven'). From Tamasahamkara 'SABDA TANMATRA' is produced. Rajasahamkara is ancillary to both of these.

Sattvikahamkara is called VAIKARIKA,

Rajasahamkara is called TAIJASA,

Tamasahamkara is called BHUTADI.

The Panca Tanmatras and the Panca Bhutas are:

1. SABDA	Tanmatra,	1. AKASA
2. SPARSA	"	2. VAYU
3. RUPA	"	3. TEJAS
4. RASA	"	4. JALA
5. GANDHA	"	5. PRITHVI.

Akasa has the (only)			1 Guna of SABDA,
Vayu	"	"	2 Gunas of Sabda and Sparsa
Tejas	"	"	3 Gunas of Sabda, Sparsa and Rupa.
Jala	"	"	4 Gunas of Sabda, Sparsa, Rupa and Rasa.
Prithvi	"	"	5 Gunas of Sabda, Sparsa, Rupa, Rasa and Gandha.

Of course in the Srutis TRIVRITKARANA - compounding of the three elements of Prithvi, Jala and Tejas is said to be the source of this objective Universe. But here Pancikarana is emphasised obviously.

Having created the PANCA BHUTAS, God has is said to have devised the intermixture of the elements in the proportion of disseminating one-half of each element in the other four Bhutas. (In the Puranas even SAPTIKARANA is pointed out including Mahat and Ahamkara in the list of the Bhutas). It comes to this then that in each one of the Panca Bhutas all the other 4 Bhutas are integrated. It is out of this Pancikarana that the bodies of all creatures are made out. Everything associated with the living beings on the earth is a product of the Panca Bhutas including our food, dress, abodes, and what not, let alone

the rest of the vast material universe in the form of rivers mountains etc.

These twenty-four Tattvas - all being Acetanas, of the class of Acit, being separate and different outwardly, God cooks them all together so to say, then enters into them and finally creates an ANDA - the Cosmic Egg. In that ANDA He creates the 'CATURMUKHA BRAHMA' - and then of course the pageantry of creation issues forth. After Pancikarana and before the emergence of this ANDA, (Andotpatti), the primary and original creation prior to Andotpatti is called 'SAMASHTI SRISHTI'. Later creation after the Andotpatti through the agency of Caturmukha Brahma is called 'VYASHTI SRISHTI'. All the troubles of the world arise from this Vyashti srishti only, this Sadvāraka srishti, for which God the Supreme cannot be held responsible directly.

All this constitutes the Saga of God's *LILA VIBHUTI*.

III. SATTVA SUNYA:

Under this class of Acit comes KALA-Time. This Kala is devoid absolutely of the three Gunas of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. Hence it is called Sattva sunya. Gunatrayarahita Jada Dravya - Kala has the characteristics of 'Nitya' and 'Vibhu'. It encompasses all the three aspects of Bhuta, Bhavishyat and Vartamana. It can be considered as of three varieties, the Past, the Future and the Present. Kala is further divided into many sub-categories such as:

Nimesha, Kashta, Vinādī, Kalā,
Ghatikā, Muhurta, Divasa, Paksha,
Māsa, Ritu, Ayana, Samvatsara etc.

In Lila Vibhuti Kala is divisible into a running series. It is in short 'Sakhanda'. In Nitya Vibhuti kala is 'Akhanda'.-indivisible and indistinguishable into parts. It may be interesting to note

that 43,20,000 human years constitute the period of the 4 yugas in toto namely, Krita, Treta, Dvapara and Kali. A thousand of these Caturyugas taken as a unit constitute a day-time for Caturmukha Brahma. Another of the time of 1000 Caturyugas constitutes his night-time. This Caturmukha Brahma is said to live for a hundred years (with a period of 2000 Caturyugas forming a Day - both day and night time included) of his own.

Thus is said to take place the twin processes of creation and dissolution during this Sakhanda Kala in Lila Vibhuti. In Nitya Vibhuti there is no such divisible time. It is all Akhanda Kala.

'Na Kālastatra Vai Prabhu'.

ISVARA TATTVA

ISVARA, God the Supreme is the original, the First Flaming Torch so to say that is Infinite and Self-manifest with Infinite Jnana and Ananda. He is 'Jnananandaika Svarupa'. Mahanarayanopanishat says: 'To begin with there was all by Himself Narayana only'- EKO HA VAI Narayana Āsīt. He is the opposite of every kind of evil and the reservoir of every kind of good.

'Akhilaheya pratyānīka - Sakala Kalyanagunakara'.

Thus He is distinct from every other entity -

'Svetara - Samastavastu - Vilakshana -

He is adorned with hosts of amiable attributes such as Jnana, Sakti etc., He has encompassed the entire Universe of CIT and ACIT and has permeated each of the things in the Universe. (Sarva Vyapi). He has Satyakama, Satyasamkalpa and Aparicchinna Jnanananda Svarupa. He possesses the honest desire, powerful will and unlimited knowledge and bliss. He is responsible for all Creation, their Sustenance and their final destruction also.

'Sakala Jagat Srishti Sthiti Samhara Karta'-

He is the imminent principle in everything of the Universe, of all that is - 'Sakalāntaryami' - He is the one who is ever attained to and served by the entire creation -

'Sakala Loka Samsevya' -

He is the ordainer of the Caturvidha Purushārthas -

'Dharmārtha Kāma Mokshākhya Caturvidha Purushārtha-prada'-

He is the one sought after by all the 4 types of beseechers - Ārta, Jijnāsu, Arthārthī and Jnānī. He is a person with a Vilakshana Vigraha radiating in Himself the six qualities in all their fullness and perfection. (Shadgunya Paripurna). He is the Lord of SRI, BHUMI and NILA -

'Sri Bhumi Nīlā Nāyaka'-

He is SRIMANNARAYANA - the PARAMATMAN. The entire Universe of matter and souls is an emanation from Him, His own Manifestation. He is the First Cause and the Only Cause of the entire Universe, whatever it is. For Sarvaloka\Srishti, He forms the source as the Upadana karana, the Nimitta karana and also the Sahakari karana.

As Himself constituting the Cidacid Visishta He is the Upadana karana.

As the entire creation is due to His Samkalpa, He is the Nimitta karana.

As Antaryami and as Sarvaniyamika at all times, He forms the Sahakarikarana also. This God, ISVARA is therefore Himself the Jagatkarana Vastu (neither Parakriti nor Jivatma as the Brahma Sutras too declare). Narayana, the Paramatma and the Paramatattva is therefore Himself the Karanabhuta. God Himself is thus Jagatkaranatva.

The question is often asked - 'Why did God undertake this SRISHTI? The oft given answer is 'Līlārtha' - for sport - The Visishtadvaitins, the Srivaishnavas usually say that God created the world for the sport and recreation of His consort LAKSHMI. It is for the pleasure and pastime of Lakshmi that God brought about this Caracara Prapanca Srishti.

'Yadbhrubhangāḥ Pramānam Sthiracararacanā Tāratamye

Murāreḥ' - (Srigunaratna kosa stanza-4)

Is God just in mooting this suffering and sorrowful world for Lakshmi's pleasures sake'? A little probe into God's desire and

intentions will absolve God of the responsibility for the sorrow and suffering in this world or any other, His creation. With all good intentions HE made His Samkalpa towards Creation. He then brought about SAMASHTI Srishti. He then created Caturmuka Brahma from the lotus of His naval, entrusting Him with VYASHTI - Srishti, all that we are and that we have. It is in Vyashti srishti, Brahma and the individual souls are all given individual freedom, Freedom of will, although ultimately God is of course Sarvaniyamaka. It is in fact these that misuse their freedom and make possible suffering and woe. God as Antaryamin will be watching them and providing them also with a note of warning, like a referee in a game, not to play foul. Of course the Referee can blow the whistle any time and stop the game. God has His own plans of dissolution, of rolling the carpet. Having ordered creation, God resides in the mid-region between Brahmaloka on top and Rudra loka at the bottom and goes on protecting the entire creation. As per His Samkalpa and plan He orders Rudra son of Brahma to bring about Pralaya and after Dissolution He takes back the entire creation into His womb in a subtle state, only to release them at the time of the next creation by Brahma (as per His orders), Hence it is expected of the souls, the actors of the Drama in God's Leela Vibhuti to behave becoming of their Divine heritage and lineage and strive hard to attain Moksha. They can attain Moksha very easily from this platform of the Lilavibhuti alone -

'Atra Brahma Samaśnute' -

'Iruppidam Vaikundam Vengadam' -

The Pancaratrins, the Srivaishnavas do not believe in EKAIKONARAYANAH. They always believe in Laxmi Narayana, Srimannarayana - in the original couple for all practical purposes - in the Divine Dampatis so to say. This Lakshmi lives in Narayana and Narayana lives in Lakshmi. They are NITYANAPAYĪ.

'Nijorasi Payodharasciramacancalām Vidyutam'

Payodharamurasyasāvapi bibharti nityam nije'.

Payodhara - the blue-black cloud is Narayana who is veritably Nīlameghaśyāma.

The lightning flash in the body of the dark blue cloud is Lakshmi so to say in His VAKSHASTHALA -

'Nilatoyada madhyasthā Vidyullekheva Bhāsvarā'

To annotate: -

Nilatoyadasya madhye tishtatīti nīlatoyada madhyasthā (Śashtitatpurush samāsa)

Lakshmi lives always in Lord's Vakshasthala.

Again - Nīlatoyadah madhyasthaka yasyāssā - Nilatoyada madhyasthā (Bahuvrīhi samasa)

In Lakshmi's vakshasthala Narayana lives and hovers about like a bee between her breasts.

'Nilātungastanagiritatī suptamudbodhya Krishnam' -
(Taniyan sloka) -

'Nappinnai kongaimal vaittukkidanda malar mārbā'
(Tiruppavai. 19)

About this Lakshmi the question is often raised - What is Her status? Is she an extraneous tattva? - cannot be- She must be classed either Jivatma tattva or Paramatma tattva.

She cannot be on a par with the Paramatma tattva as then there would result 2 Paratattvas which is reprehensible. It is absolutely derogatory to class Lakshmi under Jivatma tattva.

Parasara bhatta says:

Tadantarbhāvāttvām na prithagabhidatte srutirapi -

That Lakshmi is ANTARBHĀVA in PARAMATMA TATTVA.

Lokacharya says:

Bhartavinudaiya padukkeyaiyum
Prajaiyinudaiya tottilaiyum vidade yirukkum
mātāvaippole' -

Though on the one side she has Her Lord and His bed and on the other side the cradle of her kid, Her essential place is in the Lord however much she may love Her kids in the form of the Cetanas. This Lakshmi cannot have absolute freedom as She is essentially 'Nitya Paratantre'. Not she is always with Her Lord, She is ever dependent on the Lord. Her Samkalpa is Her Lord's Samkalpa. In other words, the Holy couple's Samkalpa is EKARŪPATA. Lakshmi Tattva has no ANTARYAMITVA independently. It is always the Holy couple's ANTARYAMITVA. Otherwise they cannot protect what they have together produced - Mother and Father are both the Joint RAKSHAKAS of the child CETANA. Can the JANAKA, the father suckle the young? Lakshmi's sannidhya is an invariable necessity for *Cetana Rakshana.*

'DEVYĀ Kārunya Rūpayā' -

Without Lakshmi (the embodiment of Karunya) how can the Lord protect?'

'Aval sannidhiyāle kākam talai petrudu' -

'Aval illāmeyale Rāvanan madindan' -

Because of Her sannidhya Kakasura was saved.

In the absence of Her sannidhya Ravana perished.

Nityānapāyini Lakshmi is always in Narayana's Vakshasthala.

It is thus that the DAMPATI TATTVA is EKATATTVA.

Periyalwar says:

Aravindappavaiyum tānum
Ahampadivandu puhandu -

The yogidhyeya Antaryami svarupa of the Lord is always NARAYANA as SRI-VIŚISHTA.

Lokācharya says:

'Akāro Vishnu Vācakah'

This Akara that is Vishnuvacaka is derived from the dhatu 'AVARAKHANE' - which always points to RAKSHAKA. This RAKSHANA is invariably by SRI sānnidhya only. Hence in AKARA SRI sambanda is anusandheya -

The Pancaratra agamas give the major significance to Lakshmi next only to the Supreme - Narayana. Lakshmi is an inherent principle in Narayana Himself and the First to dart forth from Him as HIS SAMKALPA. She is the primary Sakti of the Lord in the dual role of KRIYĀ and BHŪTI. As the first Emission from Brahman, She includes within Herself all Souls and Matter. (a detailed description is given in the chapter titled 'PURUSHI RATRI') - It is this Lakshmi that comes to the succour of the individual souls, that too of the erring souls. She knows not what retribution or indignation is. She even soothes the Lord's righteous indignation as invariably tempers His sense of Justice by Her Mercy and She is the mother of all the creations, particularly of souls.

'Maithunā eva catvāri manūnām kevalāni tu.

Kūrma prishta samānāyām bhuvi tishtanti vai mune'. (Ahir Budh. IV,14).

Lakshmi and Narayana are the Divine parents of all the creations. Hence their innate yearning for the welfare of the Cetanas.

In Saranagati gadya Ramanuja enumerates some of the extraordinary attributes of the Lord:

'Svābhāvikānavadhikatiśaya jnānabalaisvarya Vīrya-

Saktitejassausīlya Vātsalya mārddavārjava sauharda

Sāmya kārunya mādhurya gāmbhīrya audarya caturya

Sthairya dhairya saurya parākrama satyakāma,

Satyasamkalpa kritirtva kritajnatadyasamkhyeya

Kalyāna gunaganaugha mahārnavā -

This great Lord Isvara is always considered to be both UPEYA and the UPAYA - the goal and the means for the realisation of Moksha. SRIMANNARAYANA is the Goal and is Himself the Means, the SADHANA for achieving that Goal.

'TANNISHTAHSYA MOKSHOPADEŚĀT -
AMRITASSYAISHA SETUH' -

Again this Paramatman has manifested Himself in the following five forms:

1. PARA. 2. VYUHA, 3. VIBHAVA, 4. ANTARYAMI, 5. ARCĀ

The philosophy of the Pancaratras is well distilled into the Visishtadvaita by Ramanuja as also by his predecessors and successors. Some say the Ontology of the Pancaratras can be reduced to 26 Tattvas in the last resort. They are:

The 24 principles of matter (ACIT)

1 Jivatma (CIT)
1 Paramatma (ISVARA)

The Visishtadvaithins have conveniently reduced them into the compact concept of TATTVA TRAYA - the triumvirate truths of Srivaishnava Ontology namely:

CIT, ACIT and ISVARA

Frequently compounded into one phrase 'CIDACIDĪSVARA'.

These are the three ultimate entities namely Soul, Matter and God.

Bhoktā Bhogyam preritāram ca - Svet.Up. 1-12

This is the Tattva of the Pancaratras as also of Visishtadvaita. Though these three are separate from one another, all the three are not independent entities. The first two namely CIT and ACIT have evolved out of ISVARA Himself and as such they are not independent of Him. Isvara is the predominant element of the Three as He is the Ultimate source,

as He is the VISESHYA and as He retains controlling interest in the first two which are just VISESHANAS. There is an inherent organic affinity of the first two with Isvara, an inherent inseparable and necessary relation called 'Aprithak Siddhi'. The triple VERITIES are therefore said to constitute an organic unity and hence the title for the philosophy of Srivaishnavism is VISISHTA ADVAITA. It is MONISM, ADVAITA no doubt as ISVARA is all in all, the One and the Only Supreme Reality. He has produced soul and matter. These latter two as evolutes from Him are of course external to Him. Though external to Him, they are not independent of Him or foreign to Him. Not only have they their origin and source in Him, they also have their affinity to Him and dependence on Him. Hence the Advaita, the non-difference at the source is VISISHTA- qualified by their separate existence though not independent existence. In fact ACIT, Matter forms the body, Sarira for CIT the individual soul and CIT and ACIT, soul and matter together form the body or Sarira for ISVARA

Viśishtam ca - Viśishtam ca Viśishte

Viśisthayoh Advaitam - Viśistha-advaitam.

The Paramatva Tattva itself as Sukshma-cidacidvisishta in the causal state (Karanavastha) has itself become sthula cidacidvisishta in the effect condition (Karyavastha). [It is all Brahmaparinama vada.] Hence no difference between the two Visishtas. That is ABHEDA and ADVAITA therefore. This world of soul and matter, Cetanacetanatmaka prapanca being the Sarira of God (and God has permeated it through and through) the Saririn namely ISVARA is the only Supreme. Hence EKA TATTVA - Monism - Eko ha vai Narayana āsīt.

Epistemologically, even according to the Vedanta Sastra the three sources of knowledge are:

Pratyaksha, Anumana and Sabda.

Logicians have later added a fourth one namely - Sādriśyānumāna - taking into consideration 'upamana' as also a pramana.

Of course pratyakshajnana is jnana, knowledge derived from the contact of the Indriyas with the objects of the senses. This pratyakshajnana is of two varieties.

- Nirvikalpaka that is 'nishprakāraka'
- Savikalpaka that is 'saprakāraka'.

Anumanajnana, otherwise called ANUMITI is Parāmarśa janya jnāna, always inferred as the basis of the presumed universal or vyāpti. Again two types are distinguished under Anumiti, namely

- Svārthānumāna - Anumiti for one's own understanding
- Parārthānumāna - Anumiti in five steps for enlightening others.

ŚABDA is āgama janya jnana. It is Āpta vākya and an Āpta is just an Yathārtha vaktā, an honest and true speaker. Again two types of Sabda are distinguished.

- Vaidika - is Vedôkta and Āgamôkta or Śāstrôkta āgama jnāna
- Laukika - is Purushokta āgama jnāna.

It is presumed ANUBHUTI, knowledge, Jnana is in every self as a original flow - a DHĪ PRAVAHA (flood of consciousness). The source of it is God Himself who has Anantajnana, who is the fact Jnananandamaya. This flow is in its full surge (is nitya and Vibhu) in the Nityas and even in the Muktas. In the Baddha souls it is obstructed, limited and canalised. It is thereby called DHARMABHUTA JNANA (that is 'tirohita' and 'samkucita'). Every type of Jnana is 'Svatahprāmānya' and 'Svayamprakāśa' - Truth, PRAMĀ is 'Yathārtha jnāna' - knowledge corresponding to reality. In fact all jnana is of the real only (SATKHYĀTI). The difference between Truth and Error, pramā and Bhramā is just the difference between complete and incomplete knowledge. Of course while

true knowledge leads to fruitful activity, 'samvādi pravritti' and has 'arthakriyākāritva', Error has not. It leads to frustration.

The various upasanas, Brahma vidyas listed in the Vedanta sastras for the realisation of Moksha such as:

- Antarakshi vidyā, Antaraditya vidyā, Dahara vidyā, Bhuma vidyā, Sadvidyā, Madhu vidyā, Upakosala vidyā, Sandilya vidyā, Purusha vidyā, Pratardhana vidyā, Vaisvanara vidyā, Pancagni vidyā -

are all just various forms, modulations and states of Dharmabhutajnana only. Even Karma, Jnana and Bhakti yogas are just 'Avastha viseshas' of Dharmabhutajnana. Prapatti even, is Nyāsavidya and hence a state of Dharmabhutajnana.

PRAMEYA (the objects of knowledge, the ontological entities), is to begin with, classified under two broad heads:

I. DRAVYA - Substance (Self - sustaining entities) - Avasthā - Visishta.

II. ADRAVYA - Non-substance (non-self-sustaining entities) Such as qualities and attributes. - Avastharahita.

I. DRAVYA is again classified under two heads:

i. JADA DRAVYAS - Svaprakasarahita dravyas. They are: PRAKRITI and KALA. They are not self-revealatory.

ii. AJADA DRAVYAS-Svaprakasasahita dravyas. They are: 1. JIVA, 2. ISVARA, 3. NITYAVIBHUTI 4. DHARMABHUTAJNANA.

Of these 4 Ajada Dravyas JIVA and ISVARA have 'Pratyaktva sahita svayam prakasatva'- Not only do they reveal themselves they can know themselves. The last two, namely Nitya Vibhuti and Dharmabhutajnana, they are self-revealatory; but they cannot know. They are called by the special name PARAK. -They are to be known by others only, not by themselves.

II. ADRAVYAS - These are enumerated as ten in number.

1. Sattva guna, 2. Rajo guna,
3. Tamo guna, 4. Sabdha,
5. Sparsa, 6. Rupa, 7. Rasa,
8. Gandha, 9. Samyoga and
10. Sakti.

TATTVA, HITA AND PURUSHARTHA IN THE PANCARATRAS

THE philosophy of the Pancaratras is absolutely identical with the metaphysics of the Vedanta as interpreted by Ramanujacharya, the savant and saint of Visishtadvaita in his SRI BHASHYA and also with the BHAGAVAD VISHAYA OF NAMMALVAR as expounded in his TIRUVOIZMOLI, the apple of the eye of the NALAYARA DIVYAPRABANDHAM, the Tamil Vedas. The Tattva as propounded in all the three is the same namely that the Ultimate Reality is the Saguna Brahman of the Upanishads, the Vasudeva of the Pancaratras and Narayana or Srimannarayana of the Divyaprabandha. Matter and souls are just the modes of this Ultimate One and Only Reality, Isvara, the God, the para-Brahman with whatever names one wishes to call Him. The ethical and religious disciplines prescribed to realise this Tattva by the human beings in the form of the individual souls by all the three philosophies or systems are also the same. They are called the means of realisation, HITA or UPAYA. The end and aim of all human endeavour in the metaphysical, ethical and religious sphere, namely the PURUSHARTHA or UPEYA is also conceived to be one and the same in all the three systems namely Liberation, Moksha, in terms of God-realisation, seeking shelter in God's abode, once for all freed from the cycle of rebirths and the shackles of Samsara. These three namely the metaphysics, the means and the return march of the Soul, the native to his home-land, the abode of God the Supreme One, called respectively TATTVA, HITA and PURUSHARTHA in the Vedanta, the Pancaratras and the Bhagavad Vishaya by the later Acaryas in their commentaries for clarity's sake. They are collectively and more clearly designated as the ARTHAPANCAKA by the

Srivaishnavas in their religious discourses. It is well-known Indian philosophy is never a purely theoretical study, a study for its own sake, an end in itself whatever be its tinge or tone whether an Astika darsana or a Nastika darsana. It is always trained for a purpose, the purpose being liberation from the cycle of rebirths and redeaths. It is either for God-realisation or at least for self-realisation. The very criterion of Truth in Indian epistemology lies in its capacity to lead to fruitful activity, in Samvadi Pravritti. Truth does not lie in the bareness of bare light and heat. To be true is to be fructiferous of permanent happiness, the joy of the soul in its infinite consciousness and bliss. Truth is therefore at the service of soul's realisation and the soul's sole and solemn ambition is to be at the service of God in His Heavenly abode, Paramapada according to the Pancaratras, the Vedanta or any other sanguine DARSANA worth the name. Since the plan, the perspective and the programme of the Nigamas and the Agamas on the one hand and the Tamil vedas (the NALAYARA DIVYA PRABANDHAM) on the other hand are one and the same and since the two are reciprocal to each other in every way, Srivaishnavism the amalgamated philosophy of Religion of the Visishtadvaitins is called 'UBHAYA VEDANTA'. This Ubhaya vedanta is firmly rooted in the triple foundations, the RATNA TRAYA so to say of the Vedanta (The Brahma Sutras), the Pancaratras and the NALAYARAM. The juice of vital clan circulating in this ubhayavedanta of Srivaishnavism is the jnānānubhava and Rasā)nubhava of the Alwars in their spiritual ecstasy and intuitive rendezvous with God. The Ubhayavedanta of Srivaishnavism also illustrates how the two Agamas and the Nigamas strike a concordant note in the melody of the duet of the philosophical song. The Brahma Sutras of Badarayana consist of four Adhyayas. The first two chapters of the Vedanta Sutras, namely the SAMANVAYADHYAYA and the AVIRODHADHYAYA constitute a metaphysical enquiry into the nature of SAT as the Supreme Tattva. It concludes that the Tattva is the Saguna Brahman. The third Adhyaya called the SĀDHANADHAYA

discussess the means and explains the nature of HITA as Vedana, Upasana (Bhakti) and Prapatti. The last chapter called PHALADHYAYA discussess the meaning of PURUSHARTHA, the attainment of Brahman. While thus the Badarayana Sutras elucidate the philosophy of the Vedanta in terms of TATTVA, HITA and PURUSHARTHA, the BHAGAVADVISHAYA, a logical exposition of the special intuitive experience of NAMMALVAR as poured out in his TIRUVAIZMOLI are expounds the same ideas in the same way in the framework of Tattva, Hita and Purushartha.

The Tiruvaizmoli (with its beautiful and classical commentary in Arayirappadi or IDU muppattarayiram) is the heart and soul of the philosophy of Nalayaram. The opening verse itself of this Tiruvaizmoli strikes the keynote of the whole philosophy of Tiruvaizmoli in terms of Tattva, Hita and Purushartha specifically called in Bhagavadvishaya PRAPYA, UPAYA and PRAPTI.

-Uyarvara vuyarnalam udaiyavan yavan avan
Mayarvara madinalam arulinan yavan avan
Ayarvarum amararugal adhipati yavan avan
Tuyarvaru sudaradi toludu yalu yan manane.

UYARNALAM- in the first line lays bare the supreme tattva or Prapya as the Saguna Brahman (as described in the Taitt. Up.). It constitutes the TATTVA.

MATINALAM (Madinalam)- in the second line of the stanza institutes the UPAYA or the HITA, the means of realising the Tattva on the lines of the intellectual love of God, Bhaktirupapanna jnana (Prapatti when jnana is exalted by Bhakti or Bhakti is enlightened by Jnana). In fact TOLUDU in the last line clearly signifies absolute self-surrender to the Lord, the RAKSHAKA indicating thereby that God Himself is both the UPAYA and the UPEYA, the MEANS and the END.

TUYARVARU- in the last line points to the PURUSHARTHA. MOKSHA as the Parama purushartha of the

individual soul in its quest of Jnanananda, to know, love and be with God. The MUMUKSHU blessed with Mukti is no longer in the clutches of Samsara. Brahman, the PURNA has restored the Jiva to its original status of BLISS.

The Bhagavadvishaya in its three sections discourses on identical lines with the Vedanta. In fact it extols and upholds them in a more concrete, continuous and consistent way in terms of the ARTHA PANCAKA. The broad outlines of the Arthapancaka are as follows:

I. SVA-SVARUPA - The PRĀPTĀ

The nature of the soul, the Jivatman that seeks salvation, that seeks Brahman as its SARIRI or PRAKARI. The nature of the PRAKARA.

II. PARA-SVARUPA - The PRAPYA

The End to be attained and realised namely the nature of Brahman.

III. PURUSHARTHA SVARUPA - The PRAPTI

Attainment of MOKSHA, Realisation of Brahman by returning to God's abode and being in service to Him.

IV. UPAYASVARUPA - The UPAYA

BHAKTI or Prapatti as the means of God-realisation and emancipation from Samsara and the cycle of births and deaths.

V. VIRODHASVARUPA - The PRAPTI VIRODHA

The various obstacles to be overcome on the road of God-realisation such as those of AVIDYA and KARMA, the evils of AHAMKARA and MAMAKARA.

In fact, Desika has given the title of 'Dramidopanishad' to the Tiruvaizmoli. The Isvara Samhita refers to Dramida Samhita meaning Tiruvaizmoli and Dramida (Tamil) prabandham. Apart from the Mahabharata referring to Sattvata vidhi in the 66th Adhyaya of the Bhishma Parva, the BHAGAVATA refers to Pancaratra as Sattvata Samhita (Skanda I.III.8). Explaining that

worship is Vedic, Tantric or Misra, the Bhagavata recommends that in Kaliyuga Tantric worship be adopted along with the Vedic ritual.

The Pançaratra with the connotation of knowledge for Ratra (Ratram ca jnana vacanam jnanam pancavidham amritam) is said to delineate five kinds of knowledge:

TATTVA	-	Truth
MUKTI	-	Liberation
BHAKTI	-	Devotion
YOGA	-	Concentration
VISAYA	-	Material things.

These five correspond to the Arthapancaka as also to TATTVA, HITA and PURUSHARTHA. While Tattva and Mukti refer to prapya and prapti, yoga and bhakti refer to prapta and upaya. The last one Visaya or Vaiseshika refers to Prapti virodha. Referring to the greatness of the Pancaratra Agama

The Paushkara Samhita points out:

Kartavyatvena vai yatra cāturātmyam upāsyate

Karmagataissvasanjnabhih brahmanairāgamam tu tat.

The Sattvata Samhita says:

Brāhmanānām hi sadbrahma Vāsudēvakhyāyajinam

Vivekadam param śāstram Brahmopanishadam mahat.

The Paushkara Samhita saying:

Yasmātsamyakparam Brahma Vāsudevakhyamavyayam

Asmadavāpyate śāstrāt jnane purvena karmanā.

The Parama Samhita makes mention of the Arthapancaka in the Pancaratras while explaining its origin and greatness:

-Adhitā bhagavān vādāh sangopangāh savistarāh srutanicamayangani vakovākyayutanica-na ca eteshu samasteshu samśayena vinā kvacit sreyo mārgam prapaśyāmi yena siddhirbhavishyati iti-vedanteshu yathā sāram samgrihya

Bhagavān Hariḥ bhaktānukampayā vidvan samcikshepa yatha sukham-iti ca sah Bhagavan vedaika vedyaḥ parabrahmabhidano Vasudevo nikhilaheya pratyanika kalyānaikatan anantajna-nanandadi aparimita udaraguna sāgaraḥ satyasaṁkalpa catur-varnya caturasramya vyavasthaya svasthitan dharmārtha kamamokshākhya purushārthabhimukhān bhaktān avalokya apāra kārunya sausilya vātsalya audārya mahodadhih svasvarūpa svavibhūti svārādhana tatphalayā athatmyā avabodhino vedan Rig, yajussāma atharva bheda bhinnān aparimita sakhān vidhyarthavadamantrarupān svetara sakala suranaradurava-gāhāmsca avadhārya tadartha yāthātmya avabodhi Pancaratram sastram svayameva niramimiteti.

A concise exposition of the Pancaratra ideas in the framework of the Arthapancaka as udumbrated by the great scholar Lokacharya will give a clear insight into the metaphysics, ethical discipline and religious disposition of the Pancaratras being usually substantiated by other sources also.

I. SVA-SVARUPA:

One should first of all know the nature of one's own self, Atmasvarupa to begin with. The Atma varga is reduced to five classes or types:

1. NITYA
2. MUKTA
3. BADDHAS
4. KEVALAS
5. MUMUKSHUS.

The Nityas are those privileged class of souls who were never associated with Samsara and who are always engaged in Bhagavat Kainkarya at Vaikunta. They have the capacities for Srishti, Sthiti and Samhara by God's decree (Isvara Niyoga). They are the attendants of God in His different forms such as Para, Vyuha, etc. They are the followers and servants (Anucaras) of God in Sarvavastha, in all His Avatara states.

The Muktas are those resurrected souls who were once in Samsara but subsequently came out of it by Bhagavadanugraha. Being rehabilitated in Paramapada they always enjoy Bhagavat Svarupa Rupaguna Vibhuti; they are always engrossed in Bhagavat Kainkarya. They now live for ever in Vaikunta.

The Baddha class of souls are the souls of our category enmeshed in the Pancabhautika sarira being sadhanas for the Sukhadukhadi anubhava, cherishing our bodies made of flesh and blood that of course become despicable the moment of souls leaves it, unfit even for darsana or sparsana, thinking of this asuddha body of our itself as Atman and having for the Purushartha sarira poshana and enjoyment of the objects of the senses. These baddha souls are deeply seeped in Avidya, Ajnana, Anyathajnana, and Viparithajnana. These Bubhukshus are generally immersed in samsara and sins and turn away from God. Their natural proclivities are all for vices such as Raga and Dvesha, Love and Hate, acquisition of material wealth and injuring others' person or feelings. The sinners ever willing to sin more and more.

The Kevalas are a class of souls that have achieved self-realisation within themselves and have got restored their innate infinite Jnana and Ananda. But they are not God-realised souls. Having known and understood the sorrows of Samsara, having discussed and realised Sastra Janya Jnana about Prakriti and Atman, being convinced that Prakriti is heya and dukhajanaka and that Atman is Prakriti Vilakshana, different from Prakriti and that it is Svayam prakasa, Svayam sukhi and Nitya, these souls have just achieved Atmalabha as their Paramapurushartha completely ignoring God and Purushottama and comfortably oblivious of Paramatma prapti. This is an unfortunate class of souls although highly evolved in stature. By means of Yoga they have just realised Atma prapti and think that that is the finale of all their spiritual endeavours. A Kevalin will have attained emancipation from the cycle of births and deaths as Raja yogi; but at what cost and for what purpose is the question.

Kaivalya is indubitably disclaimed as not Moksha as it does not imply the Sānnidhya prāpti of God and as it does not import service to God. A Kevalin is just a lover of liberation, Svatantrya kama and not a lover of God. The fond of hope some is that he may one day realise the emptiness of his bliss and turn to God.

The Mumukshus are the fortunate type of souls who hanker after Moksha, having completely realised the secret and essence of their own souls. The Mumuksha has really understood the genuine nature of the Jivatman as just a Prakara or mode of Brahman the Supreme. It is Brahman's sarira and Brahman is the Soul's saririn as the source, sustenance and satisfaction of the finite self. Adheyatva, Vidheyatva and Seshatva are the hall-marks of the individual soul in relation to Brahman who is the ADHARA, NIYANTA and SESHI. These three characteristics of the soul namely its modality, dependence and serviceability compel the soul to look to Brahman as its Destiny, Saviour and Master. The Jiva is 'Upadeya', Viseshana and Amsa and Brahman is the supreme source, super subject and the inner self- The heart throbs of the Mumukshu are always for God as the Sesha to the Seshi, as the Dasa to the Svamin. The slogan of the yearning soul is invariably 'DĀSOHAN' and not 'SO-HAM'. Two types of Mumukshus are distinguished, the Upasaka and the Prapanna.

II. PARASVARUPA:

Again five sub-divisions are there as in Sva-Svarupa and in each one of the Arthapancakas. They are:

1. Para
2. Vyuha
3. Vibhava
4. Antaryami
5. Arca

These five manifestations of God are described in detail in the earlier chapters. God is both imminent and transcendent.

The entire Universe is His creation. He is both in Upadana karana and Nimitta karana. It is by His samkalpa, He has evolved Himself into the Universe of matter and souls. The entire universe is His Leela vibhuti. He is more than His Leelavibhuti. He dwells in His Nitya vibhuti as the transcendental being. He is the embodiment of the six original gunas, Shadgunya paripurna. Both the Jivas and the material Universe have their source in Brahman Himself. The Jivas are described as eternal and infinite and as pure consciousness and bliss and as being largely of the nature of God Himself - Bhagavanmaya (says the Ahirbudhnya samhita). These Jivatmas are said to owe their existence entirely to the Spiritual energy of God - Bhagavad bhavitah sada (Ahirb. sam.). In describing the emanation of Acyuta, Satya and Purusha from Vasudeva, the Jayakhya samhita is of the opinion that such an emanation occurs only naturally and not by His Samkalpa. These three Acyuta, Satya and Purusha that evolve out of Vasudeva are said to behave as one through mutual reflection and thus in their subtle form they are said to exist in the heart of men as the dynamic energy of God, that not only helps the souls to have the enjoyment of their experiences, but also ultimately helps in the gradual awareness of their source and thus leads them finally to their ultimate destination. In other words, according to the Jayakhya it is from God Himself His tripartive energy emanates and constitutes Atman, the inner Microcosm of man. By this divine dynamic energy the pure consciousness in man comes into contact with his root instincts (the vasanas, products of prakriti, matter). Even matter, all the non-sentiment beings of the Universe are the special forms of Brahman Himself ultimately as the coils are of a coiled up snake - Ahi kundalavat

'Aheḥ kundala bhavarjubhavavat tasyaiva Brahmana
Samsthana viśesha eva acidvastuni' -

The soul entangled in the coils of matter is the soul in bondage. Ultimately the same indwelling divine dynamic energy produces emancipation also - Hence it is all Leelavibhuti.

The Jayakhya samhita inadvertently makes the remark that when emancipation is brought about the conscious element of the individual becomes merged in Brahman - It is obviously an instance of terminological inexactitute if we view it in the overall picture of the constitution of the individual soul in relation to God and the concept of Moksha (it is Atmanubhava). The Ahirbudhnya samhita posits to begin with that God as the Shadgunyaparipurna cannot and actually does not have any unfulfilled desires in Him. He veritably possesses absolute independence in Himself. At the same time He often resorts to a sportive activity called His Leela vibhuti playing like a king and sporting as He wishes.

'Sarvair an-anuyojyam tat svatantragam divyam īsituh,

Avāpta - Visva - Kāmopi krīdate Rājavat vaśī '

- (*Ahirb. sam.* XIV.13).

It is all the KRIDĀ, the Leela, the sport of God. The innumerable activities are just His sport, the manifestations of His Thought - activity called by the special nomenclature of SUDARSANA. Soul and Matter are His own products, His own Amsas, in the last resort. He plays with them. In that playful activity of His, in that merry sport, the Jivatman (with all its original innate infinity of consciousness and bliss) gets contaminated with Prakriti and gets veiled so to say (The infinite consciousness gets shrouded and blurred; the ananda becomes belittled, and restricted) with the three impurities of Avidya (ignorance), Ahamkara (egoism) and Raga-Dvesha (attachment and antipathy). The Jivatman thus infected with ignorance and egoity becomes an afflicted Baddhatman. It begins to pursue its desires and the pleasant ones and shun the unpleasant and the painful. That is how the Jiva becomes more and more infected with the root-instincts, the VASANAS. The coils of Prakriti get tighter and tighter round the soul. Thus the soul becomes entangled in the cycle of births and deaths. This registers the fall of the Jiva from its resplendent glory, its original Divine status of Omniscience and Ananda. All this is the result of God's

playful activity and as it precedes time and is thus beginningless, the bondage of the soul is also presumed to be beginningless. At the same time, apart from God's great powers of Creation, Sustenance and Destruction, He has two other remarkable powers in Him namely:

i. Anugraha - Favour.
ii. Nigraha - Disfavour.

If the transgressing Jiva looks to God for His Anugraha, grace, God does take pity on the sorrowing and suffering soul that has entered into bondage. If the grace of God lands on the Jiva, it retract s from all selfish activities, turns to teachers and Scriptures, conducts itself in a becoming and dignified way loving and adoring God and finally attains Liberation from the bondage. On the other hand an erring soul in bondage unconcerned with God will receive its just dividents from God's sense of justice and Nigraha and goes deep into damnation and deeper into bondage. God of course feels sorry for such an errant soul and waits for his return and request. God's role is there both inforging the fetters for the soul as also in snapping those fetters. The soul when launched into Leela vibhuti gets inevitably bound. Again God is there to reclaim it back into His Nitya vibhuti fold. But that requires unfortunately the willing co-operation of the individual soul. Many Baddha souls, strangely enough develop the will to non-co-operate.

III. PURUSHARTHA SVARUPA:

Those ends that are desired by Purusha, the individual soul are called the Purusharthas. Here again five Purusharthas are enumerated:

1. Dharma
2. Artha
3. Kama
4. Atmanubhava
5. Moksha

DHARMA: When once a person is born on this earth he has to eke out a means to live, and conduct himself on the path of righteousness. Varnadharma and Asramadharma are age old ordinances of Dharma.

ARTHA: One has to acquire Dhana and Dhãnya and use them well with discretion and Dharma.

KAMA: This means the love for worldly things that satisfy one's senses including the Manas (The Ekadasendriyas). Kama also includes the love of pleasures in SVARGA after one's demise on this earth. Most of the vedic sacrifices promise pleasures both here and the hereafter. Kama with its pleasures cannot be equated with happiness. Happiness is unsullied joy without any tinges of pain. There are certain items of permanent happiness too. But the pleasures of the senses are all ephemeral and associated with pain.

ATMANUBHAVA: This refers to enjoying the genuine pleasures of the soul. It is the joy of self-realisation. A true yogin whenever he gets into samadhi realises the joy of the soul, its inner identity with Brahman. He may replace from Samadhi, terminate temporarily the joy of Atmanubhava and return to Jagritavastha or he may end up in Samadhi, become a kevalin and be completely dissociated from all the vasanas of Prakriti. Even rebirth is impossible for him again. Some say it is liberation or Nirvana. Of course it is self-realisation. For instance in Jayakhya samhita 3 kinds of yoga are discussed:

1. Sakala
2. Nishkala
3. Vishnu

In the Sakala or the Savigraha type of Yoga the yogi to begin with concentrates on the gross idol of the deity. As the concentration proceeds in intensity there come to his mind the idea of a glowing circular disc. The concentration then is directed on to the dimension of a pea, on to the dimension of a human hair on the head, it still further deepens and sharpens into the

dimension of a hair on the human body. Consequently on the perfection of this practice the Brahma randhra opens up for him. In Nishkala yoga the yogin meditates on the ultimate reality thereby getting revealed his own essence as Brahman. In Vishnu yoga he is said to meditate on the mantras thereby getting the ultimate reality revealed. By these processes of yoga, the yogin ultimately passes out by the channel of Brahma randhra leaves his body and is said to obtain unity with the ultimate Reality. Absorptive trances and concentration on Mantras give the best results in Atmanubhava.

MOKSHA: Is considered to be the Paramapurushartha, Purushartha-*par excellence.* It is the one and the only aim, the cherished ambition of every mumukshu, the God loving aspirant after liberation as it is primarily - Nityaniratisaya ananda - Bhavatmaka providing everlasting happiness in the presence of God in His abode. True Moksha entails Bhagavat sānnidhya prāpti. Moksha is not Atmanubhava, is never Kaivalya. True Moksha is of the nature of Bhagavadanubhava (Experience and enjoyment of God's immediate presence). Moksha therefore cannot be here and now. It can be attained only in Paramapada, in the region of Nityavibhuti. This Paramapada in the domain of Nityavibhuti is also called Vaikuntha. It is said to be beyond the Viraja river and an unlimited Urdhva - Loka; a region of pure Suddhasattva where the Nityas and Muktas reside worshipping Srimannarayana in His own original above. The Suris will be performing their Nityakainkarya there to God the Supreme -

'Sadā paśyanti Sūrayah'-

Ahirbudhnya samhita in its fourteenth chapter describes Mukti as the attainment of God-hood-

'Bhagavattāmayī prokta muktih' - (XIV.3)

'Anāvilam asamkleśam Vaishnavam tad viśet Padam'- (XIV.41). Though it is often described that at the time of emancipation, the Jivas enter in God and never come out of Him again, it can never mean that they become one with Him. According to the samhitas they do retain their separate existence.

Of course it is pointed out that the liberated souls inhabit God's abode the Vaikunta which is often regarded as identical with Him - that is all. This state is often described as 'Salokya - Mukti'- The Jivas are never lost in whatever form or status they may be. They cannot be lost or disintegrated out of existence even in Brahman - impossible. They are as eternal as Brahman Himself. When once they are evolved out of Brahman, Moksha is a condition and state for the soul which can never once again relapse into the bondage of Karma and samsara. Further Moksha is impossible on this earth or in this body as it is. It always implies giving up the gross body and making a journey to the abode of God, in the region of Nityavibhuti beyond the banks of the VIRAJA. Having exhausted all the prarabdha karmas (that are of the nature of 'must be gone through'- avasyam anubhoktavyam-), achieving cessation of all activities (that earn either 'Punya' or 'Papa'), discarding the sthula sarira (which is notorious for involving the owner in Tapatraya and entagle him in the shadbhava vikaras of ASTI, JAYATE, VIVARDHATE? APAKSHIYATE, PARINAMATE? APAKSHIYATE, and VINASYATE - and also help him to ignore if not forget God) and assuming a Sukshma sarira (subtle body), the soul resumes his journey on the Arciradi road for the destination of the river Viraja. There at the Viraja, the soul with its subtle body takes a dip and with it ejects the sukshma sarira (that is also of the nature of prakriti) along with all the clinging root-instincts of Prakriti (Vasanā renus). Being divested of everything of Prakriti absolutely, the bathed soul then assumes the form of 'Aprakrita divya mangala vigraha' that is of the nature of Suddha sattva (it must always be borne in mind that the soul is never nude. It has always for its robe a body, material or of suddhasattva) whose brightness surpasses the effulgence of even a crore of Suns. The soul then resumes its travel, enters the domain of Vaikunta, is received by the Holies and conducted to the Almighty's presence in the Divya manimantapa. God is pleased at the return of His loving Cetana, given him a hug and permits him to be for ever with Him in His service (Kainkarya).

This is an authentic travelogue of the good souls' last journey to Vaikunta to meet ISVARA and be for ever with Him. The veracity of it lies exclusively in Sabda pramanya. More detailed and graphic descriptions of this journey are given in Tripadvibhuti Mahanarayanopanishad, in the Vaikunta Gadhya of Ramanujacharya and in Lokacharya's Rahasyas such as Arciradi, Sri Desika describes the Paramapada Sopana - the ladder to Paripurna Brahmanubhava - and eternal bliss. The five rungs of the ladder he suggests may be enumerated thus from the bottom rung to begin with:

1. VIVEKA
2. NIRVEDA
3. VAIRAGYA
4. BHITI
5. PRASADANA
6. UTKRAMANA
7. ARCIRADI
8. DIVYADESA PRABHAVA
9. PRAPTI.

The significance of this 'Sopana' will be explained under Sadhana or Upaya Svarupa.

Even the Purusha sukta refers to the concrete region of Paramapada in the words 'Tripadosya amritam DIVI'-

Where is the Paramapada prapti and the veritable Bhagavat Sannidhya and where is Yogic sadhana and Samadhi ?

In Moksha, in the region of God the soul actually experiences and enjoys the presence of Brahman fully and for ever. There is no return for the soul. Hence it is Paripurna Brahmanubhava. How then can we ever imagine that the individual soul is lost in its identity? There is no disintegration for Atman. It is impossible.

The logic of the concept of Liberation is incontrovertible if only one ponders about it deeply.

IV. UPAYA SVARUPA:

Here again five means of achieving emancipation are proposed.

1. KARMA
2. JNANA
3. BHAKTI
4. PRAPATTI
5. ACHARYĀBHIMANA.

The means for the attainment of Liberation is prescribed to be a virtuous way of living without pursuing any selfish ends - the Yoga of Nishkama karma -

'Sadhanam tasya ca prokto
Dharmo nirabhisandhikah ' - (Ahir. B.S. XIV.4)

The Ahir. B. Samhita having defined 'Prama' as the definite knowledge of a thing as it really exists and having also pointed out that the means by which this Prama is obtained is called 'Pramana', then says that what is sought to be discovered by the pramanas is the Pramanartha, that which is beneficial to mankind. Pramanartha is said to be of two kinds: Hita and Sadhana. Sadhana is the means that indirectly helps one to achieve what is beneficial. But Hita is the direct means of achieving what is supremely and absolutely beneficial to mankind as it straightaway helps one to achieve oneness and union with God. The two ways that lead to it are DHARMA and JNANA. This Jnana is once again of two types:

Sakshatkara	-	Direct intuition,
Paroksha	-	Indirect and Inferential.

Dharma as the cause of knowledge is once again of two types;

i. The one that leads directly to Isvara sakshatkara. It is the direct Dharma, the way of the Yogin, called in the Samhitas as the 'Sattvata Śāsana'-

ii. The indirect Dharma is the course leading to self-abregation, self-realisation through self-sacrifice. Emancipation is a 'Sadhya' through self-effort (Sadhana).

The Jayakhya samhitas also makes a distinction in Jnana as Sattākhya and Kriyākhya. It says the Kriyakhya jnana involves the moral disciplines of Yama and Niyama and it is through this Kriyakhya that Sattakhya Jnana is realised. Under the Yama and Niyama virtues such as purity, study of the scriptures, penance, absence of cruelty to others, forgiveness, respect for others' properties, disinclination towards the pleasures of the senses, honesty, sincerity and thoughtfulness, speaking not only the truth but also truth - tinged with kindness (satyam bruyat - priyam bruyat), giving gifts to the deserving persons (Dana), etc. etc. are all enumerated.

In a reported dialogue between Brahma and Parama, as mentioned in Parama samhita, it is pointed out that the knowledge obtained by means of yoga is far superior to any other kind of knowledge. Yoga is simply described in an impersonal way in the Samhita - as the calm application of One's mind to any particular object of thought or problem. It is just thoughtful and peaceful concentration in any activity one undertakes:

'Yat karoti samadhanam cittasya visaye kvacit,
Anukulam asamkshobham samyoga iti kirtayate'.

Jnanayoga in the samhita is described as steady and undisturbed concentration of Jnana.

'Yadi tu Jnana evarthe cittam badhnati nirvyathah,
Jnanayogah savijneyah sarvasiddhi-karah subhah'.

Jnanayoga is obviously extolled very highly and considered superior even to Karmayoga although it is allowed to co-exist with Karmayoga. Jnanayoga as described in the samhita is to a great extent on the lines of Cittavritti-nirodha so far as the intensity of concentration is concerned. But the most vital point of Jnanayoga according to the samhita is that the Yogin should

always have God as the centre of his concentration. Yoga of course includes Pranayama and samadhi. The yogin putting himself into deep meditation of God should detach himself from all worldly bonds. Karmayoga and Jnanayoga with the moral disciplines of Yama and Niyama and also of Vairagya and samadhi should be ultimately supported in Brahman. By means of these two yogas, the individual is said to attain Brahman. By the practice of Yama and Niyama involving vrata, upasana, dana and vairagya, the vasanas, the root-instincts are said to gradually wither away. The individual achieves self-control. By Jnanayoga the individual is led to Isvara pranidhana - He is convinced that he is absolutely dependent on God in every way. He will be able to get rid of the root of attachment to worldly things - by Karma and Jnana, Bhakti is sure to be awakened in his mind. He begins to love God and finally seeks union with God.

The Vishnu samhita while describing Bhagavata yoga points out that true yoga consists in perfect body and mind control. Yoga consists in the control of passions such as lust, greed, anger, etc. The mind by yoga develops viveka. With viveka it cannot only assess things properly, it also develops the capacity for self-analysis, and self-criticism. A purified and disciplined mind gets a nausea for the worldly things and a love for God. He feels always dependent on God. He develops Bhakti and finally achieves union with God by Bhagavatha yoga. Yoga is considered necessary prelude to Bhakti.

Tasmat sarva prayatnena bhākto yogi bhavet sadā

The Ahirbudhnya samhita in its 31st chapter describes the ways of attainment of union with the highest.

i. Yair bāhyayāgah kriyate sadhanaih trividhaih iha,
Samkalpa siddhaih taireva devaprati samarcanam,
It is worship.

'Hridayāradhanam proktam etat sarvatha sadhanam,
Yadvā bhagavate tasmai svakiya ātma samarpanam,

Viyuktam prakriteḥ s'uddham dadyādatmahavih svayam,

Visishta daivatayāsmai cakrarūpāya mantratah'. XXXI. 3-5.

Meditation on the Highest in the form of some of His powers as this or that specific deity by the intonation and practice of the Mantras.

It is Atmasamarpana or Hridyaga.

II. YOGA:

It is the union of the Jivatma with the Parmatma,

'Samyogo yoga ityukto Jivatma Paramatmanoh'

'Ashtanga esha kathito yenātmā driśyatām gatah'-

'Ashtanganyasya vakshami prithaktani niśāmaya'

'Yamasca niyamascaivam āsanam tadanantaram'

'Pranayamastatah proktaḥ pratyaharasca dhāranā'

'Dhyānām tathā samādhiscāpi angānyetani Narada'

- XXXI. 15-17

Ashtanga yoga - yoga with its well-known 8 accessories. It is pointed out that union with the highest is possible through Karma and Yoga.

Karma is said to be of two kinds:

1. **Pravartaka :** That which is prompted by desires and finally leads to fulfilment of desires.

2. **Nivartaka :** That which is prompted by the cessation of the desires and finally leads to emancipation.

The YAMAS - are enumerated as ten:

Satyam dayā dhritih śaucam Brahmacaryam kshamā,

Ārjavam, Mitāhārah tathā asteyam ahimseti Yamā daśa -

The Niyamas are enumerated as ten again:

Siddhanta-sravanam dānam matirīśvara pujanam,

'Santoshaḥ tapaḥ āstikyam hrīḥ japasca tathā vratam,

Etetu Niyamāḥ proktā daśa yogasya sādhakah'-

(Slightly different from what is said in Patanjali's Yoga sutra II.30 and II.32 - Patanjali lista ahimsa, asteya, Brahmacarya, aparigraha and satya under Yamas. Sauca, santosha, tapah, svadhyaya and Isvarapranidhana Patanjali includes under Niyamas).

As already stated, the fall of man is due to his association with Prakriti and the Vasanas. As he has lost his original unsullied consciousness he is steeped in Ahamkara and Mamakara. He is bound by his own Karmas and is simply bloated with them. By means of Karmayoga, the performance of yajna, dana, tapas, dhyana, Sandhyavandana, the Pancamaha yajnas, agnihotra, tirtha yatra, Punya Kshetravasa, kriccha, candrayana, punyanadi snana, vrata, homa, japa, tarpana, image worship and such other religiosities, he can of course deflate to a great extent the accumulated karma in him. By following the yamas and the Niyamas, the DOs and the DONTs are prescribed in the scriptures he can to a very great extent discipline his feelings thoughts and actions. For instance, if a person has the habit of listening to and reading the holy scriptures (Siddhanta sravana), if he is inclined to give and be charitable (dana), if he has faith and trust in the mandates of the scriptures (Mati), if he is in the habit of worshipping God (Isvarapuja), if he has natural contentment within himself (Santosha), if he has firm faith in the realisation of God (Astikya), if he is naturally ashamed to do the undesirable (Hri), if he is of the habit of intoning the God's greatness as revealed in the Mantras (japa) and if he accepts the path revealed by his teachers (Vrata), he certainly becomes a better man getting a disgust for the material pleasures and temptations of mundane existence. So also if he trains himself to be truthful (honest to himself and to others) satya, if he develops the disposition to be kind to all (daya), if he is steadfast and bold never to swerve from the right path (Dhriti), if he is always pure and righteous in his conduct (Sauca), if he abstains from lust (Brahmacarya), if he is unruffled under all provocations and forgiving too (Kshama), if there is unanmity in his thought, word and deeds (arjava), if he is under controlled diet not taking

prohibited food (mitahara) if he has no greed for others' properties (Asteya) and if he abstains from hurting anyone even in thought word or deed (ahimsa), he is certainly a noble soul qualified for higher realisation.

When the individual has realised that he is entangled in the vortex of Avidya - Karma and is over powered by Tamas and when he now has a trained mind, he understands that Karma should be freed from Vishaya kama - He begins to practice Nishkama karma. He never broods over the objects of the senses and the pleasures of the sense, as he is convinced that they finally lead to his own ruin.

'Dhyayato vishayam pumsah sangasteshupajayate,
Sangat sanjayate kamah kamat krodho abhijayate,
Krodhat bhavati sammoh. sammohat smriti vibhramah,
Smritibhramsāt buddhinaso buddhinasat pranasyati'.

He gets over the twin enemies of love and hate - (Ragadvesha viyuktah). He practises Tapas, Dana and Yajna -

Tapas means 'Saucam, arjavam, Brahmacaryam ahimsa ça'- It also means being truthful (anudvegakaram vakyam satyam) in a pleasing way (Priya hitam ca yat). Dana means - Right giving of gifts without expectation of returns to the right person at the right place and time - (datavyam iti yaddanam diyate anupakarine, dese, kale ca patre ca)-

Yajna is offering oblations to Gods and means in remembrance of their helping to maintain the cosmic order.

True Karma yoga lies in the practice of Nishkama karma and it is a means to Mukti. In this transformation from Kāmyakarma to Nishkama karma, karma is actually illumined by Jnana. By the practice of Ashtangayoga, the mumukshu gets the benefit of 'Atmavalokana'- the Mumukshu desiring to know Atman is called ĀRURUSHU. When he gets through Jnanayoga Atmasakshatkara he veritably becomes an ĀRUDHA. That is Jnanayoga, realisation of the inner self, the Pratyagatman.

Jnanayoga is ATMA DARŚANA. The yogi selects a sequestered spot and practises the Astangayoga of Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi.

By Astangayoga the yogin becomes really enlightened. He sees the same self in all the Jivas owing to the similarity of their spiritual intelligence (Dharmabhuta Jnana). He gains the correct Atma drishti, - develops sweet reasonableness and Vinaya. He intuits the same Atman in man or dog. He achieves inner sakshatkara, self-realisation -

'Bahiranga antaranga akhyayam adyanga kalapavan,

Cittavrittinirodhatmā yogo yaganuśāsane,

Śaśvadabhyāsa vairagya pareśa pranidhanatah,

Sakshatkarāvabhāsākhya siddhasuddhapa vargadaḥ'-

(Ahrib. Sam. XIII. 27-28).

Of course by Jnana yoga, the mumukshu attains liberation not by devotion to God but by constant meditation on the nature of his own inner self. He is only a kevalin who prefers the joy of Kaivalya. Yatindramata dipika referring to the Kevalins, the exclusive Jnana yogins says that though liberated they live like 'the wife who has lost her husband'- in some corner outside both the highest heaven and the cosmic egg. Of course one school of Srivaishnavism (the southern school) say that Kaivalya attained by Jnanayoga is Mukti itself. The emancipated Jnani has peace and release from rebirth and samsara but not the bliss of divine life. He just stays on the outskirts of the Paramapada, of course not in communion with God. The northern school, the vadagalais are of the opinion that the Kevalin is on the road to Moksha all right - He has to traverse a little more. There is every probability that from the realisation of the Atman he seeks to realise Paramatman also. The leap from Purusha to Purushottama is any time expected. He is surely on the road and in the mood to God-realisation.

Genuine Jnana, true enlightenment should generate Bhakti in the individual, love and adoration for God. Of course

Jnanayoga is the primary sadhana for Kaivalya moksha just as karmayoga is a mukhya sadhana for Aisvarya. Yet just as karmayoga is a sahakari for Jnana, Jnanayoga is definitely a sahakari for Bhakti. Having acquired Jnana by means of karmayoga, in his dhyana the yogi establishes the image of Vishnu with Lakshmi in the lotus of his heart and concentrates. The knowledge of God normally leads to Love of God. That is Bhakti Yoga.

Caught up in the snares of Avidya-karma, the blinding and limiting forces of Prakriti, the Mumukshu, the aspirant for Moksha first of all sheds the beguiling factors of Ahamkara and Mamakara through the practice of Nishkama karma. He does everyone of his duties in the name of God without the least expectation of rewards for whatever he does. In a way it is Brahmarpana. By the disciplines of yama and niyama and also by the practice of Yogabhyasa he gets enlightened. He understands the essential nature of his own self as absolutely dependent on God. He may try to achieve the union of his individual self, the lower self with the Higher self namely Paramatman lodged in himself as the Antaryamin. The Higher self, God is described in the Ahirbudhnya samhita as the subtle (Sukshma), all pervading (sarvaga) all sustaining (sarva bhrit), of the nature of pure consciousness (Jnanarupa), eternal (anadi-ananta) changeless (avikarin), knowing all the pervading all, although seemingly without the cognitive or conative appertunances and protecting all. He is approachable through Jnana (Jnanagamyam niranjanam)-

To quote from the samhita:-

'Śrunu tat paramam sukshmam sarvagam sarvabhruttayā,

Jnānarupam anādyantam avikāri nirāmayam,

Acakshuḥ srotramasparshamapānicaranam dhrivam,

Namajātyādi rahitam avarnam agunam tvapi,

Visvasravo Visvacakshur Visvapānipādam param,

Aśoktam acaram śāntaṁ svayamjyotih anupamam,

Durastham antikacaram jnanagamyam Niranjanam,
Bhutabhartri samajyotih jyotisham tamasah param,
Aksharam Sarvabhutastham Tadvishnoh Paramam Padam'.
(Ahrib. Sam. XXXI. 7-10).

Jnanayoga helps to make it possible for the Jivatman to seek union with the PARAMATMAN-

'Tatprāpti sādhanam yogah karma ca Sruticoditam'-

But no one wishes to stop at the realisation of the Inner Atman. Equipped with Vairagya and Viveka through Karma and Jnana Yogas, the Mumukshu wants to return home, the abode of God and meet the Father there, God with SRI, Bhumi and Nila. That is the prime objective. Hence the shedding of Ahamkara and Mamakara immediately leads to Upasana or Bhakti. True Jnana transforms itself into Bhakti. It is the Bhakti-rupapanna Jnana, Jnana turned Bhakti. Brahman as the saririn of the Jiva, is the 'prapaka' as well as the 'Prapya', the endeavour as well as the end. The supreme Self is to be reached in its own abode and that is possible only by Bhakti. So far it has been made clear that there is absolutely no distinction between the various systems in their Tattva and HITA. The Brahman of the Upanishads, the Vasudeva of the Gita, the Bhagavat of the Pancaratras and the Arca of the Alwars all point to the same Supreme self and all insist on Bhakti yoga as the direct means as it provides a rocket-ride to God. References to Bhakti and Prapatti are innumerable in the Vedas too:

Rigveda refers to Śraddhā - (X. 15).

'Śraddhām devā yajamānā upāsate'

The Suklayajurveda says that it is Śraddhā (Faith) that finally leads to Truth.

'Śraddhayā Satyam āpyate'-

The Samaveda says that Śraddhā is the Mother and Mantra is the Father-

'Śraddhā Māta Manuḥ Pitā -

The Mahabharata says that Śraddha itself is the Great God. (Santiparva LIX).

'Daivatam hi mahat Śraddhā' -

In fact in all the Scriptures, the terms Śraddhā, Bhakti and Jnana are all taken together as giving the same import. The Kaivalya upanishad says that we must know God by their aid -

'Śraddhā bhakti dhyāna yogad avaiti'-

Lord Krishna himself says in the GITA:

'Manmana bhava madbhakto
Madyaji mam namaskuru,
Mamevaishyasi satyam te
Pratijane priyosi me - . (XVIII.65).

Fix thy mind on ME, Be devoted to ME.

Dedicate everything to ME, Surrender completely to ME.

'Tameva saranam gaccha,
Sarva bhavena Bharata,
Tatprasadat Paramam Santim
Sthanam prapsyasi Sasvatam'. (XVIII.62).

'Sarvadharman parityajya
Mam ekam saranam vraja,
Aham tvam sarvapapebhyo
Moksha ishyami ma sucah'. (XVIII.66).

One must surrender to God absolutely in all loving devotion, faith and trust. God is sure to provide succour and wash the soul of all its sins. If the Mumukshu wants the Śāśvatha - sthānam, the abode of God he has to resort to Bhakti and Prapatti only.

The Upasana is detailed as of seven stages in the Bodhayana Vritti:

1. **VIVEKA:** First of all the devotee should have enough of discrimination and the knowledge that his body is a living

temple of God Himself as He resides in him as the Antaryamin and has taken his soul itself as His body.

2. **VIMOKA:** 'Vimokah kamanabhishvangah' - He must be absolutely bereft of Kama and Manyu, Love and Hate.

3. **ABHYASA:** He must realise and experience God's presence ever in himself under all circumstances -

'Arambhanam samsilanam punah punar abhyasah' -

4. **KRIYĀ:** 'Pancamahayajnanadi anusthanam saktitah, Kriyā - He has to perform the five-fold Srivaishnava Yajna of serving all creatures, the human society, the Guru, the forefathers and the Gods.

5. **KALYANA:** The practice of virtues such as Satya (truth- fulness), Arjava (integrity) (purity in thought, word and deed), Daya (kindness), Dana (charity) etc.

6. **ANAVASĀDHA:** He should not entertain unwanted doubts and fears.

7. **ANUDDHARSHA:** He must be a true Sthitaprajna on the lines of 'Samatvam yogamucyate' -

A man of such a make-up in thoughts, feelings and actions will be a true Bhakta. His dhyana, meditation like the ceaseless flow of oil -

(Tailadhāravat avicchinna smriti santana rupa) - (Sri Bhashya) culminates in Upāsana. The Bhakta will realise that what is not possible for mere studies or discursive reasoning is possible for Dhyana deepening into Bhakti.

'Nāya mātmā pravacanena labhyo na medhaya na bahunā Srutena' - (Katha Up. I.ii.22).

He will understand that the eight - fold path of yoga is not primarily meant for mere Kaivalya jnana, but truly for Brahmopasana. True knowledge, genuine wisdom makes a mumukshu humble. He understands that God is the real *Adhara,*

Niyanta and Seshi and that he is only a Sesha. He understands that he does not live for himself but for God. He then feels that everyone of his activities, everyone of the karma he does is a KAINKARYA to God. Karma illuminated by Jnana thus becomes ŚESHI KAINKARYA - Service of God. Thus this Śeshi - Upasana culminates in Bhakti. It is in this sense that the true Bhakta is a true Jnanin. The one who has realised that God is all - 'Vasudeva Sarvamiti'-

'Bahunam Janmanam ante'

Jnanavanmam Prapadyate,

Vasudevah Sarvamiti,

Sa mahatma sudurlabhah'.

God is not available to anyone but a true Bhakta.

'Bhaktyātu ananyayā sakhyam aham eva' -

Thus when the Jiva, the Prakara seeks God the Prakarin in devotion and faith, it so happens that God with His abundant Mercy in return Himself seeks the Jiva and saves the Soul. It is in this sense that God is both the UPAYA and the UPEYA, the Prāpaka and the Prāpya. God pronounces -

'NA ME Bhaktaha Pranasyati'-

Even the worst sinner is saved by God's grace because of Bhakti.

'Madbhavam yāti - Na atra samsayah' -

He attains ME; there is no doubt about it.

Through devotion he becomes aware of Me, takes measure and having known Me in truth, he enters into ME' - says God Himself.

'Matprasadat avapnoti sasvatam padam avyayam' -

'Yam prapya na nivartante tat dhama Paramam Mama' -

The Bhakta reaches God in Vaikunta once for all, never to return.

The Sva-Svarupa anusandhana is reversed in the case of a Bhakta and it becomes Para-Svarupa anusandhana. The true Bhakta realises he is absolutely dependent on God and that he exists for God. His Bhakti deepens into Love for God - Prema marked by the glow of loyalty. Such an ardent Bhakta of God is characterised as a PARAMEKANTIN with exclusive devotion (Eka Bhakti). His essential traits are:

Absolute dependence on the Lord,
Exclusive existence for the Lord,
Intense love and loyalty to the Lord.
God in turn loves the devotee most -
Jnanitvatmaiva me matam -

When such true Bhakti becomes a means to Moksha it is called PARA Bhakti.

This Bhakti with the craving for God's direct intuition is called PARAJNĀNA. When the ardent soul yearns for God so intensely that God in turn yearns for the soul, it becomes PARAMABHAKTI.

Paramabhakti implies acceptance of the Highest Lord as the master of oneself. Karma, Jnana and Bhakti depend of course on self-effort. When there is progressive realisation of the essential trait of Paratantrya, absolute dependence on the Lord for one's being and existence through the ascending series of Karma, Jnana and Bhakti, it is but meet for the soul to resort to Prapatti, absolute self-surrender to God. Prapatti is Saranagati - Falling at the feet of God, feeling completely helpless without God and also feeling absolutely safe in God's grace. Prapatti is the true logical conclusion of Karma-Jnana-Bhakti.

'Prekshāvataḥ pravrittir - yā
Prahvībhāvātmikā svatha,
Utkrushtam param uddiśya
Tan - namah parigiyate' - (Ahirb. S. 52-2.)

The true feeling 'Na mah' - 'nothing mine' implies that everything is God's. The soul gets the deep conviction that the entire Universe exists for God and is dependent on God as in the last resort it constitutes the Deha of God Himself - The sincere feeling arises in the devotee - 'God is supremely Superior to Me and I am absolutely inferior to HIM' - 'The NANTRI-NANTAVYA bhava. 'The Sesha-Seshitva bhāva - Superiority, Jyayan consists of greatness of qualities and existence prior to Time (anavadhikātiśaya - prakarshavisishtasya jyayah sabdamukhyarthavat).

'Jyayamscaiva tathājyayannaivabhyam vidyate Parah' -

'Kalato gunatascaiva prakarsho yatra tishtati'

- (Ahirb. S. 52/4)

'Sabdastam mukhyayā Vrittyā Jyāyā nityavalambate' -

There is absolutely no motive in this love and adoration for God. It is spontaneous whence once the Jiva knows God is its kind master.

'NAMAH' - means bereft of the two - 'Ahamta' and 'Mamatā'. When they are gone, there is awakened absolute submission to God.

Usually two varieties of Prapatti are distinguished:

1. Ārta prapatti,
2. Dripta prapatti.

He who has acquired a real knowledge of God and thereby got disgusted of everything around him, who has completely surrendered to God in all faith, trust and love and seeks God's immediate redemptive grace without any delay, he is called an Ārta prapanna. He yearns, prays, craves for God to take him back immediately.

On the other hand a prapanna, having known and understood the greatness of God as the one and the only ultimate Reality, as the Seshi, Niyantā, Svamin, Saririn, Vyapaka, Dharaka and

Rakshaka, as the Bhokta, Sarvajna sarvasaktiyuta Sampurna and avāpta samsara Kāma and having simultaneously been absolutely convinced about his own helplessness and absolute dependence on God, *waits for God* to give him HIS Grace as He wishes and at His own convenience. It is Dripta prapatti. A Dripta prapanna waits, sure of God's abundant mercy and grace. An Ārta prapanna gives the S.O.S. call and is impatient to wait. His only urgent prayer is to get God to his presence so that he can get away with Him.

The doctrine of Prapatti, Nyāsa or Saranāgati is well explained in the 37th chapter of the Ahirbudhnya samhita.

'Prapyate Paramam dhāma yato nāvartate punah'-

'Tena tenāpyate tattannyasenaiva mahamune'-

'Paramatmā ca tenaiva sādhyate Purushottamah'-

'Shodhā hi vedavidusho vadantyenam mahamune'.

'Ānukulyasya samkalpah prātikulyasya varjanam,

Rakshishya īti viśvāso goptrutvavaranam tathā'

- (Ahirb. Sam. XXXVII. 25-27).

'Atmanikshepa karpanye shadvidhā śranā gatih'

- (Ahirb. Sam. XXXVII-28)

If one sincerely feels he is the worst sinner and absolutely helpless and also sincerely believe that God the Supreme, with His abundant Mercy and Grace will never let him down but saves he is sure to be saved.

The only Upaya vacaka required is:

'Aham asmi aparādhānām ālayo akincano gatih'

- (Ahirb. Sam. XXXVII. 30)

'Tvameva Upayabhuto me bhaveti prarthanā matih'

'Saranagatih ityuktā sā deve asmin prayujyatam'

(Ahirb. Sam. XXXVII.31) .

'You are my only saviour. I absolutely depend on You. I am absolutely helpless and the worst sinner - Save me ! -

That is all that is required of a Prapanna - The intensity of feeling, Conviction and trust God can understand and convinced, He surely saves the Yearning Soul -

When the Prapanna everytime feels and experiences 'NAMAH' that nothing is his own not even his self, how can he feel he tries to evoke the mercy of God? It is all God's concern. It is for Him either to accept or reject this soul which is His bhogya vastu. The soul is absolutely helpless, helpless even for any activity of approach - It is Paragata Svikara if God Himself approaches the helpless but ardent soul and takes it with Him. It is Svagata Svikara if the soul seeks Him by its own efforts. A critical of these two will be made in the next chapter.

The Ahirb. samhita asks how can a helpless soul make efforts? Convinced firmly of his own absolute helplessness and feeling absolutely dependent on God in every way, the soul at best can persist in a prayerful mood only and do nothing else. The rest is all left to God. Prapatti is therefore explained as only an 'Upaya Jnana' and not as an UPAYA to be pursued - It is primarily a mental attitude of helpless within one self and also the feeling of absolute faith, trust and hope in God the - Almighty. A Prapanna is like a passenger in a boat. The passenger simply sits helpless at the mercy of the boatman. It is for the boatman to do the rest and the needful. The samhita says:

'Atra nāviti drishtantad upāyajnānameva tu,
Narena krityam anyat tu nāvikasyeva taddhareh'-

Obviously it is a pointer to Paragata Svīkāra.

Further it is pointed out Sudarsana prapatti is also necessary for the Prapanna:

'Bhagavansarva vijayisahasrāāparajita
Śaranam tvām prapannosmi,
Srikaram sri Sudarśanam'-
'Anenaiva prapannasya Bhagavantam Sudarśanam'
'Tasyanubandhāh pāmpānah sarve naśyanti asamśaym'
- (Ahirb. Sam.XXXVII. 32-33).

The role of Sudarsana in removing all obstructions in the way of Moksha is underlined. This also will be discussed in the next chapter.

Finally the greatness of Prapatti marga is extolled in the following verses of the Samhita:

'Kritanyanena sarvani tapamsi tapatam vara,

Sarve tīrthāḥ sarvayajnāḥ sarvadānāni ca kshanāt,

Kritanyanena Mokshasca tasya haste na samsayah'-

Why the performance of yajans, yagas, tapas, the undertaking of pilgrimages, giving away gifts and so on and so forth. Moksha is in the hands of Prapanna. It is so easy though so great! It is for this reason that God is in Arca and has made the descension into the concentrated idols. The Alwars easily reached God by this means. They made Prapatti before the Arca vigrahas and attained Him; or God reached them. It is only Prapatti that can compel God to come to him the easiest way. The secret of it is God is overflowingly merciful. The call of a loving soul He cannot ignore! The helplessness of a yearning soul He cannot bear to tolerate for long. He rushes to the Prapanna as a mother rushes to her crying babe, as a cow rushes to her baying calf.

5. ĀCĀRYĀBHIMĀNA: A person may be unfit to follow the paths of Karma, Jnana or Bhakti. Yet he may have absolute faith and trust in God's aparakarunya, abundant mercy and grace. A helpless child may be ailing. The mother is there to administer the required medicine to the child and then suckle her child with her breast milk. In the same way anticipating God's pleasure in resurrecting him, the helpless and unqualified aspirant for God's grace may seek a Guru, a Paramabhagavata, have abundant faith in him to bring God to him. To him Guru first and then God. It is the responsibility of the Guru to bring God to the Sishya. The Sishya obeys his Guru and seeks everything in him and through him. This is not only an Upaya

by itself, the most efficacious, but it can also be helpful to the other Upayas.

V. VIRODHI SVARUPA:

These are the obstacles to be encountered in the way of the above Upayas and to be neutralised. They are also five in number:

1. Sva-Svarupa Virodhi: Abnormal affection and love for one's own body and soul (Dehatmabhimana) takes one away from God. Naturally one wishes to nurse his body and senses well. Even after the death of the body he wants his soul i.e. himself to enjoy the pleasure of Svarga. In other words he ignores Moksha and wishes to wallow in pleasures in the here and the hereafter,

Forgetting that God is the Master and Proprietor of his soul, he thinks he is the master of himself and may even go a much 'Anya Seshatva and Sva-Svatantrya' are two other obstructions, which one should inhibit.

2. Para-Svarupa Virodhi: Forgetting outright the Para-Svarupa of the Lord, Vasudeva the Supreme, many are inclined to regard many of the minor deities as the Supreme. (Devatantra Pratipatti) Some may even imagine that there is no Ultimate God at all in the sense of the Supreme creator, sustainer and destroyer, a God Omniscient, Omnipotent and Omnipresent. Some others may lean on Kshudra Devatas that cater to their sensual, ephemeral or undesirable needs. A few others may view the Avataras of God as simply exaggerated human beings in poetic imagination. They may think that Rama and Krishna were just ordinary human beings with some miraculous powers and not at all divine incarnations. Many may pooh-pooh the Arcavatara of God and rile at idolatry saying that it is just a hoax played on the believing masses. All these are hindrances to knowing God, and His greatness. The lover of God should be far away from such dangerous views.

3. **Purushartha Virodhi:** Viewing Kama and Artha as the prime Purusharthas in themselves is of course abominable. But many are naturally inclined that way. A few others with all their ascetic fervour and enlightenment believe that Dharma itself is the Parama Purushartha. Moral rectitude is more than enough. Why a God and why worries about Him? This attitude should be avoided as it takes away the very meaning and purpose of existence.

4. **Upaya Virodhi :** Making a fetish of discursive reasoning to the exclusion of every other means, looking down on Bhakti and Prapatti is a fatal mistake. It may lead to agnosticism and atheism even.

5. **Prapti Virodhi:** Being unmindful of the Prarabdha - karmas such as avidya-karma and insulting God and his Upasakas, in other words, Bhagavadapacāra, Bhāgavatapacāra and Asahyapacāra there in short constitute Prapti virodhi. One should never give room for any such transgressive ideas to enter one's head.

A person with Arthapancaka Jnana will be a true Srivaishnava. He is never enamoured of Samsara, although he lives, essentially for God's sake. Of course he will be following his routine duties as per his varnāśrama dharma. He will be a highly cultured person, well enlightened, good and kind in his thoughts, feelings and actions, dedicating everything he does to God. He feels always dependent on God and his ultimate objective is attainment of Moksha through Bhagavadanugraha. He loves and respects the followers of God, the Bhagavatas in the same way as he respects and adores God. He is the most simple, sincere, honest and harmless individual always in a prayerful mood. He is as dear to God as he is to every other fellow-being.

Yamunacharya has pointed out in his 'Gitartha Sangraha' that the Bhagavadgita with its 18 cantos can be easily demarcated into three Shatkas of 6 chapters each elucidating the

triumvirate of Tattva, Hita and Purushartha. It is significantly revealed in the Gita that Krishna Himself, the Lord Incarnate is all the Three.

The first Shatka of 6 chapters expounds Karmayoga and Jnanayoga as the veritable means to Bhakti.

The second Shatka explains Bhakti yoga as the Supreme means to Mukti.

The last Shatka being a compendium in itself of the entire truth upholds Prapatti as the most effective means to Salvation. It is in fact the GITA that has provided the CARAMA sloka and it is Lord Krishna that is recognised as the Parama Acharya of the Srivaishnavas.

THE ELIXIR OF SRIVAISHNAVISM

PRAPATTI

The followers of the Pancaratra are given three Mantras for daily recitation and meditation towards the realisation of the Parama Purushartha. All the three are given by the Supreme Lord Narayana Himself according to the tradition. The first of the three is called The TIRUMANTRA, the second DVAYA and the third 'CARAMA SLOKA'.

I. THE TIRUMANTRA:

'AUM NAMO NARAYANAYA' -

It is also called the MULA MANTRA.

Of yore Narayana is Himself said to have undertaken the NARA-NARAYANA avatara at Badarikashram in the Himalayas and have given this Mantra. Assuming the role of a teacher he accepted 'Nara' as His disciple and gave this Mantra for the beneficience of Mankind.

II. THE DVAYA:

'SRIMANNARAYANA CARANAU ŚARANAM PRAPADYE'

'SRIMATE NARAYANAYA NAMAH'

He is said to have given this second Mantra to Lakshmi, His consort at Vishnu loka.

III. THE CARAMA SLOKA:

'SARVA DHARMAN PARITYAJYA MAMEKAM
SARANAM VRAJA'

'AHAM TVĀM SARVAPAPEBHYO MOKSHA ISHYAMI MĀ ŚUCAH'-

This Mantra He addressed to Arjuna on the battlefield Himself seated in the chariot, having enlightened Arjuna previously and also revealed to him His Visva Rupa (The sloka is the 66th in the 18th Canto).

For all these three Mantras God Himself is thus the Acharya, Prapaka and Prapyā. That is why Kurattalvan has acclaimed God Himself as the First Acharya in Srivaishnava tradition.

'Lakshminatha Samarambham
Nathayamunamadhyamam,
Asmadacharya paryantam
Vande Guruparamparam'.

Mantras are of three classifications, Tamasic, Rājasic and Sattvic. Of all the Sattvic Mantras, the Tirumantra is proclaimed the best. It is called the famous 'Ashtakshari Mantra'- Its greatness is extolled in many ways:

'Aum ityekaksharam, Nama iti dve akshare,
Narayana yeti Pancaksharani' (Maha Narayan Up.)
'Tvayo Vedākshadangani, chandamsi Vividhāsvarāh'
'Sarvamashtaksharamtastham, yaccanyadapi vangmayam'.
'Caturantam bhuvam bhoktum, praptuvam anamararājatām'
'Ashtaksharohyupayassyāt, trivargassyatu kimpunah'.

The tradition is that God as Narayana taught Himself as NARA, the Tirumantra. It is obviously the vedic 'OM Namo Narayanaya'. For the benefit of the erring unfortunate souls, to help them reach the opposite shores of the ocean of Samsara, God assumed the form of the disciple just to reveal to the people of the world how to conduct themselves as Sishyas. Of course there are innumerable Mantras that reveal the true nature of the Lord such as:

'NARAYANAYA VIDMAHE
VASUDEVAYA DHIMAHI
TANNO VISHNUH PRACODAYAT' -

But there is the Tirumantra given to man under the most peculiar circumstances of God Himself assuming the double role of both a teacher and a pupil. This Mantra is therefore considered to be the Divine Inheritance of Man, a heritage and not a self-acquired possession. Hence it is said in the Periyatiruvaymuli, that the knowledge of this Mantra elevates one into the Noble Family (I.1.9). It showers all the desirable boons. It can give wealth, Kaivalya prapti and also the attainment of God for those who seek Him in particular. It destroys all the obstacles in the way of Karma, Jnana and Bhakti. It has in a nut-shell all the Tattvas to be known (says the Periyatiruvaymuli VIII.10.8). Tirumangai Alvar says 'Having known YOUR eight letters, I can speak of other things' - This Mantra gives five great meanings:

1. The true nature of the individual souls.
2. The object of attainment in accordance with the true nature of the individual souls - namely Kainkarya of the Lord, Service to the Lord.
3. The true nature of subservience unto the Lord,
4. The means of seeking refuge in the Lord,
5. The results derived therefrom (MOKSHA).

This Tirumantra consists of eight holy letters compounded into three words. It is compared to the mangala sutra of eight strands held in three sheaves.

The three words in the mantra are said to reveal 3 meanings:

i. Subservience unto the Lord;
ii. Dependence on the Lord;
iii. Service unto the Lord.

The first of the three words in the mantra is the Pranava, AUM - consisting of the three holy letters A, U, and MA. These letters are said to be symbolic of the essence of the three Vedas even as butter is obtained by churning cream stored in three vessels. The Pranava AUM contains within itself the quintessence of the three Vedas, Rig, Yajur and Sama.

Of the three letters in AUM, the first letter 'A' is obviously the origin of all letters and sounds. It is the diminutive form of the word 'NARAYANA' denoting the great Lord who is both the cause of the world as also its protector. So Ākāra in the Pranava connotes Paramatman - 'Aksharanam 'A' Kāro asmi' - Bhaga.Gita.X.33.

The third letter in the Pranava namely 'MA' is patently the 25th letter in the alphabet and is Jnanavaci - It therefore signifies the Atman, the individual soul - souls of all classes, the Baddhas, the Muktas and the Nityas.

The second letter 'U' that comes in between 'A' and 'MA' is definitely determinative on account of its position in the syllable 'AUM'.

'Sthanapramanattāle U kārma avadhāraṇārtham' -
(Mumukshuppadi.)

The letter U therefore points to the inherent and the inevitable relation, yoga between 'A' the Lord (Paramatman) and 'MA' the individual soul (Jivatma):

" 'A' kārārtho Vishnuḥ Jagadudayarakshā Pralaya krit"

" 'MA' kārārtho Jīvah tadupakaranam Vaishnavamidam".

" 'U' kāro ananyārham niyamati sambandham anayoh"

'Trayīsārastrayātmā Pranava imam artham samadiśat'
- (Parasara Bhatta).

So there is an integral inherent relation between this 'A' and 'MA' as there is between the rays of light and the source from which the rays emanate or as between a flower and the fragrance that originates from it. Thus the Pranava AUM vindicates the integral relation between the individual soul and the Lord, between the Protected and the Protector. It comes to this that the soul is absolutely dependent on the Lord who is absolutely

Independent. It is this 'DEPENDENCE' that constitutes the essential nature of the Jivatman, the individual soul.

The moment any sense of independence creeps into the soul, that marks its nemesis. As Nammalvar says: (Tiruvaizmozi. IV.8.10) if at all there is any respect and cognisance given to the individual soul it is because of this dependence on God.

It is presumed that if at all the Lord is to be the protector, He is to be with Lakshmi. Venerable Senapati Misra has said 'When Lakshmi leaves His breast, she leaves this letter 'A' also (as quoted in Mumukshuppadi). Lakshmi can neither leave her consort the Lord as in 'A' nor can she desert her child, the Jivatma as in 'MA'. She therefore occupies the position of 'U' in the Pranava 'AUM'.

The next word in the Tirumantra is 'NAMAH' - It consists of two words 'NA' and 'MAH'.

'MAH' means that which belongs to oneself

'NA' means 'not that'.

'NAMAH' therefore implies 'One does not belong to oneself' with the clear implication that the soul does not belong to itself, (but to the Lord).

To realise the full import of this term 'NAMAH - three obstacles are to be overcome:

1. The obstacle standing in the way of knowing the essential nature of the individual (i.e. of oneself).

2. The obstacle that stands in the way of practising the means for Salvation.

3. The obstacle that stands in the way of attaining the goal of salvation.

The first obstacle can be removed by realising the full import of 'Namah' on the part of the individual soul (Tiruvaimozi. II.9.9)- ' I (the Jivatman) am your inseparable mode; Everything of mine is yours; there is nothing of my own, not even ME'-

The second obstacle can be taken off by sincerely feeling 'without you I am lost; If you don't destroy my anguish, there is no protector for me - (Tiruvaimozi V. 8.8.)

The third obstacle can be obviated by having the one and the only desire of serving God and nothing else (Tiruppavai-29)

It then dawn's on the individual

1. That the essential nature of the soul is that it is God's own - His absolute dependant and servant (Tiruvaimozi. IV.6.1.)
2. That the means to salvation is seeking refuge in GOD, (Tiruvaimozi. III 3.6)
3. That the goal of salvation is service to the Master (Tiruvaimozi X.8.7.).

In Periya Tiruvaimuli it is pointed out that 'Namah' not only means 'Dependence' on the Lord, it also implies 'Dependence on the devotees of the Lord' - 'I have acquired service to your devotees after learning the Ashtakshari' says Tirumangai Alvar (VIII.1.3.)

The last word in the Tirumantra is 'NARAYANAYA' - this term is actually compounded of three words, Nara, Ayana and Aya. 'Nara' stands for the collection of all the eternal substances, everything of Nitya vibhuti and Leela vibhuti including the Primeval six gunas of the Lord.

'AYANA' means the 'Support'.

'NARAYANA' therefore simply means ' the abode of all that is', the support of everything in the Universe - the basis for all and the Master of all.

'AYA' is the dative case termination, implying that there must be the desire in men to do Kainkarya to the Lord (as in the case of Sesha who becomes an umbrella when He moves - Tiruvandadi). Thus we must do service to the Lord always at all places and in all circumstances without any obstacles, remaining with Him at all times. (Tiruvaizmoli III. 3.1.)

Thus we observe that the Tirumantra enunciates the Jivatma Svarupa very clearly in its absolute dependence on the Lord and also proclaims the Parama Purushartha as Bhagavat Kainkarya.

The three words in the Tirumantra are very explicative:

In 'AUM', 'A' signifies the Lord, the overall Master and the proptector of the Universe, MA indicates the individual soul as its absolute dependant. The middling, the letter 'U' indicates 'Ananya Seshatva' meaning that the 'Ma' the Jivatman is not dependant on any other than the Lord Himself.

'Namah' clearly points out that there is no question of self-protection for the individual soul, as all its weal and welfare is in the hands of the Lord Himself.

'Narayanaya' relevantly points out that one should always be at the service of the Lord and His devotees too-

The second Mantra is the DVAYA - This mantra has in itself 2 Mantras: The Dvaya Mantra states that Lakshmi is the means for the attainment of the highest object of human pursuit, for the Lord does not act unless there is the mediation of Lakshmi. For Lakshmi to mediate on behalf of the individual soul the soul must be convinced:

1. That he is absolutely dependant on God and has nothing by himself and in himself.
2. That there is no refuge for him other than the Lord.

Of the two sentences in the Dvaya Mantra, the first sentence states categorically that the lotus-feet of the Lord must be sought after as the only means through the mediation of Lakshmi.

The second sentence demands that absolute surrender should be made to Narayana as associated with Lakshmi.

SRI is the name of Lakshmi. The term SRI has two meanings:

1. As 'SRĪYATE' - it means one who does service unto another,
2. As 'SRAYATE' - it means one to whom service is done.

Everyone realises his essential nature through Lakshmi; but she, Lakshmi herself realises her essential nature through the Lord.

Lakshmi is therefore referred to as the Mediatrix: the PURUSHAKARA.

However naturally good the Lord may be he will be provoked to righteous indignation at the misdeeds of the Cetanas. As the Supreme Master of the Universe He is naturally inclined to be just and mete out punishment to the erring souls. Lakshmi always established in the heart of the Lord and His Nityanupayini has the quality of transforming of Lord's indignation and sense of justice into mercy and the sense of forgiveness. This pardon she secures for the individual soul from the Lord because of her innate affection for Jivatman as she happens to be its mother. It is this dual role she plays as between the father and the son that entitles her to be the Purushakara. It is only Lakshmi by her intervention that tones down the absolute independence of the Lord and make possible the manifestation in Him of the benevolent qualities congenial to the sinning souls: qualities such as: Parental indulgence (Vatsalya) sweetness of disposition (Madhurya), easiness of approach (Saulabhya forgiveness) (Kshama), as also the final favour of conferring moksha also on the individual soul.

The extreme limit of God's easy accessibility is His emanation into Arcavatara, His manifestation in idols and images. It is in the consecrated image of the Lord, His two feet are veritably, palpably accessible. It is the DIVYAMANGALA VIGRAHA of the Lord in the ARCA form (the central subject of the Pancaratra Agamas) with His CHARANAU that is the true heaven and the very refuge of the aspiring soul for God-realisation. It is therefore the Divya Mangala Vigraha of the Lord that is the Force of the Pancaratrin and that is where he excels in his saranagati with the exclamation 'PRAPADYE'. It is made possible because of Lakshmi, the mother of the souls. It is made possible because of Narayana is essentially SRIMAT - The

suffix 'MATUP' states that the union between God Narayana and SRI is eternal. Narayana is therefore always Srimannarayana.

Thus the essential import of the first sentence in Dvaya Mantra is this:

I, the individual soul surrender absolutely at the holy feet of the Lord.

In the next sentence 'Srimate Narayanaya Namah'- Srimate simply means - To Him who always remains with Lakshmi.

Narayanaya indicates 'To Him to whom all objects are subservient - Him to whom the entire Universe belongs. The dative case is used to point out 'that service of the Lord' is the purpose for which surrender is made.

The next word "Namah' - it discloses the fact that all the obstacles in the way of service to the Lord are destroyed.

Thus the Dvaya Mantra makes known both the Upaya and the UPEYA.-

The third Mantra is the CARAMA SLOKA: In spite of having enlightened Arjuna on the knowledge of Atma and Paramatma Svarupa, in spite of having discoursed upon the Karma, Jnana and Bhakti margas and having revealed to him the Visvarupa, when Krishna observed that Arjuna was still in distress and had no idea of an easy approach to God-realisation, He announced to him in the last resort the one and the only means, the quickest and the easiest way of reaching God. It is called the Carama Sloka, the last stanza indicating the last resort beyond which there cannot be conceived any other means. It is pronounced in the follwing way:

'Sarva dharman parityajya mamekam saranam vraja,
Aham tvam sarvapapebhyo moksha ishyami ma sucah'.

The first half of the stanza deals with what is to be done by the sincere aspirant. The second half delineates what God does later having encountered the beseeching soul. The means as enunciated by God in this stanza for attaining Him by the ardent

soul will have to make God Himself the instrument of realisation. The Lord Himself out of His bountiful mercy and anxiety for the yearning soul has agreed to take upon His own shoulders the responsibility of redressing the soul's distress and taking him unto His bosom. The end and the means, the Upaya and the Upeya lie in one and the same person, namely God. That is the maximum that God Himself could do for His ardent devotee who has absolute faith and trust in Him, and taken unto Him as the last resort and his only recourse.

The first half of the stanza consists of 6 words:

Ordinarily the term Dharma refers to works that are capable of bearing fruit. Here Sarva Dharmas - all the other means of Salvation as stipulated in the scriptures and the smritis, all the disciplines of Karma, Jnana and Bhakti yogas must be looked down and given up with a sense of shame (when man resorts to God Himself directly, every other means pales into insignificance).

'Parityajya' - means giving up and the prefix 'Pari' clearly points out giving up with a sense of discredit

'Mam Ekam'- refers to the Supreme and none else:

Those who seek refuge in ME alone-

'Mameva ye prapadyante'- Gita VII.14.

One aught to seek refuge in the Primal person alone-

'Tameva cadyam purusham prapadye'- Gita XV.4.

In my case may *YOU* alone be the means-

'Tvameva upayabhuto me bhava'- (Visvaksena sam.)

You have given me your holy feet alone-

'Alinakku nin padame saranagatandozinday'

- (Tiruvai.V.7.10)

It all means 'To God the Supreme Himself and to none else'-

'Vraja'- It underlines of course seeking refuge (not as a means) but as the end in itself.

It signifies that even the act of seeking refuge proceeds from God's grace only (Tiruvaimozi. II.7.6.)

It means Prapatti as the last resort does not imply any efforts on the part of the surrendering soul. When all other efforts in and through tye yogas have been discarded as futile, as they imply the consciousness of an effort and when the individual recoils to his basic state of imbecility and absolute helplessness, tho sense of dependence on the Lord gradually arises in the soul. When all self-efforts have waned and withered away, the sense of dependence on God automatically emerges of its own accord and by God's grace waxes by itself in the mind of the helpless, and ends itself up in Prapatti. Ananya Saranatva and Ananya Gatitva - mark the upsurge of Saranagati of its own accord by the grace of God without any effort on the part of the soul. It is from the qualm and conviction of helplessness that Saranatva in God arises in the mind. It is therefore purely a condition of the mind, a stance of the intellect revealing its helplessness, (as it is said in the Mahabharata, XIII.2.8.7) that salvation is to be attained through knowledge.

'Aham tvam sarva papebhyo moksha ishyami'-

I will make you a free soul purged of all sins-

'I will make you a free soul'- implies

1. I needn't make any effort to release you,

2. You needn't pray to Me any more for release,

3. All sins will leave you of their own accord. They automatically wither away when once you have reached ME.

'Ma Sucah'-

'Don't grieve'-

When one has surrendered to God and God has reached him, there is no question of grief as it is an impossibility in the circumstances (Tiruchandaviruttam-115).

Prapatti is therefore a true awareness of the essential nature of the soul - namely its absolute helplessness and dependence on

God outright. All that a Prapanna has to do is not to do anything as it otherwise obstructs the flow of the Grace of God. He must in himself be fully aware of God and His greatness as also of His affluence in mercy in association with Lakshmi.

'Bhagavatpravritti Virodhisvapravritti nivritti prapattih'

Prapatti is anulment of self-exertion (Sva-pravritti) which comes as an impediment in the way of God's Will (Bhagavat-Pravritti) to save the soul. The Jivatma belongs to the Lord and His cherished possession. It is for the Lord to guard His possession. It will be a travesty of ownership if the individual soul puts forth attempts to protect itself in the eyes of the master. No worse insult could be cast on the Lord and no better example for the self's arrogance and haughty demeanour can be cited.

'Svatvamātmani sanjātam svamitvam Brahmani sthitam,
Uphayoresha sambandho netaro abhimato mama'.-

There is 'Svatva' in Jivatma and there is 'Svamitva' in Paramatma (Isvara), and this *status quo* is never disturbed. An essential condition and pre-requisite for the Jivatma to perform Prapatti is Atma jnana. A knowledge of its own svarupa, an awareness of the truth of its own personality which obviously lies in Dasya - Servility - The Primary attributes of the Soul are clearly demonstrated to be three namely, Jnana, Ananda and Dasya. The first two are mostly found blurred and besmirched because the soul has a perverse tendency to forget oft and on, its last but most primary trait (according to the vedas) of Dasya. Avidya-ahamkara invariably inclines the soul to forget its kinship with the Divine in the relation of Dasa to Svamin, servant to Master, the owned to the owner. In self-conceit the individual soul may persuade itself to think that it can look after itself. It thereby traps itself in self-deceit because its attempts at saving itself checks the free flow of Divine grace upto itself. Hence it is believed 'PARAGATA SVIKARA' and NIRHETUKA KATAKSHA' are the only operative factors that burst the fetters of Samsara and provide permanent release for the soul to be for ever at service to the Lord in His Heavenly

abode. This Paragata Svikara is opposed to Svagata Svikara and this Nirhetuka Kataksha is the dire opposite of 'Sahetuka Kataksha'- Herein lies the controversy between the two sects of Srivaishnavas, the Tenkalais and the Vadakalais. The Tenkalais believe in the voluntary unconditional free flow of God's grace unto the individual soul in distress and suffering. They say God needs no pretext for His grace to man. His bountiful grace is ever uncaused - (Nirhetuka) and is a natural streamline directed towards the yearning soul where the least resistance is expected in the form of any Ahamkara - Avidya (arrogance of self-effort). It is ultimately Paragata Svikara because it is God Himself that seeks the soul to bestow His grace. Hence it comes to this that God Himself is both the means and end, in this divine act of saving the soul. That is why Prapatti is considered to be both the Upaya and the Upeya in itself. This concept of the free flow of God's grace uncaused and unconditioned is well explained in the Pancaratra samhitas as also in Bhagavad vishaya. Nammalvar refers to it "Velide arul śaivār'- (Tiruvaimozi.V-3-8). He describes it as the Lords' abundant Love streaming into the soul and enamouring it-

'Ederi alal bukku'-(Tiruvaimozi.II.7.6). He says just as one cannot resist the influx of Karma so also one cannot resist the inflow of God's grace, in spite of one's ignorance and egoism-(avidya-ahamkara).

'Vidhivakkinrākkā pārer' - (Tiruvaimozi.V-1-1)

However much one might have sinned owing to one's association with mula-prakriti, when there is this Nirhetuka Kataksha of God streaming down upto him, he is simply engulfed by God's grace and utmost kindness and carried through to the safety of His abode. He is delivered from sin and admitted into His presence and into His service.

The Vadakalais on the other hand do not believe in Nirhetuka Kataksha and Paragata Svikara. They are at a loss to understand as to how there could be an unconditional flow of God's mercy and grace even without a petition or a request.

They insist on a cause, a compelling circumstance, a 'Vyāja'. In other words they believe in Sahetuka kataksha. Without a 'hetu', a reason or request, God's grace need not be in evidence, they say. Similarly they also point out that without an effort even on the part of the individual, grace need not manifest. God helps only those who want His help. Before they desire His help they must deserve His help. They should seek Him in all earnestness. Therefore it is only 'Svagata svikara' that is permissible and that is actually the case. God is neither so chivalrous nor so cheap they mean to imply in their arguments. According to Vedanta Desika, the Protagonist of this school, every individual has his own freedom of choice and freedom of will. Man errs by his freedom. He is equally free to feel sorry for his sins. He can improve himself by Karma-jnana yogas. By Karma yoga he can improve his conduct and by Jnana yoga he becomes truly enlightened on the Tattva Traya. He can know his essential nature, the nature of the material Universe and also God the father and protector of the entire Universe of Cit and Acit. When once his mind is disciplined by Karma-jnana, there arises in him Bhakti. He can then take on to either Bhakti-yoga or Prapatti yoga as the surest means (Upaya) to salvation. Desika recognises the superiority of Bhakti and Prapatti over Karma and Jnana and says that both Bhakti and Prapatti equally lead to Mukti. Of the latter two, he once again prefers Prapatti to Bhakti. He admits Prapatti is easier of performance, more akin to the innate propensities of the soul and also quick in delivering the results as it has the directness and immediacy of approach to God, the Heavenly father. It is the best Upaya to realise the Upeya. But Prapatti is to be performed by the individual soul. Before surrendering to God the individual should have a sense of Akincanya, a sense of unworthiness of himself because of all his sins and must have been overwhelmed by remorse, contrition or penitence for all his transgressions of the nature of omissions and commissions. In doing Prapatti he must seek God in all earnestness and in all humility. Of course God will be moved to save him by the mediation of Lakshmi, the Purushakara and He does save him, sure and certain. God never acts in the absence of

a vyaja (reason) and God never bestows His grace in the absence of an effort on the part of the individual to seek His grace. It is pure and simple Sahetuka angikara and Sahetuka kataksha. God can never therefore be both an upaya and prapya the means and the end, both the upaya and the upeya in Himself. God is to be sought after by the yearning soul just as the baby-monkey seeks the under-belly of its mother and clings to her with effort. Only then is its safety the mother's responsibility. (It is called Markata upaya - the 'monkey theory'). Pillai-Lokacharya and Manavala-mahamunigal, the protagonists of the Tenkalai school who uphold that God Himself is both the Upaya and the Upeya pronounce the Marjarà nyaya - the cat theory-just as the mother cat herself seeks the kitten and carries them by mouth to safety, so also God Himself seeks the helpless souls in distress and provides them succour. If the kitten launch into self effort and wander away hither and thither they are lost. So long as they lie helpless and await the mother, she surely comes and fetches them to safety.

It is universally admitted that God's grace in Prapatti is impossible without the significant role of Lakshmi and her mediation on behalf of the Prapanna. Only Lakshmi is capable of converting Lord's meticulous sense of strict justice into unlimited mercy for the soul. She is therefore called the Divine Mediatrix, Purushakara as between God and the individual soul. It is said that during the period of her union with the Lord she corrects the Isvara and His law of retribution. During the period of her separation from the Lord she corrects the Jivatman and leads him to the Lord. That both Isvara and Jivatman are corrected by her, is admitted by all. She is said to tone down the Lord by her beauty and convert the cetana by her mercy. She is said to possess the three essential characteristics of :

1. Kripa - kindness to the souls,
2. Paratantrya - dependence on God,
3. Ananyarhatva - servility to none other than the Lord.

Illustrations for these innate tendencies and essential traits of Lakshmi are profusely quoted from Ramayana which is taken by the Purvacharyas as the Saranagati veda. In fact there is a chapter in Ramayana on Abhaya Pradana and it is considered to be the Upanishad of Vibhishana Saranagati. Lakshmi's kindness (Kripa) is well-defined as Paradukkha asahishnutva. She cannot bear the pangs of other's sorrows. She feels terribly unhappy in others' miseries. 'Parah dukkhe dukkhitvam' - That is why she is said to have entered the prison of Ravana (though she could have easily avoided it) just to be one with the other thousands of women suffering imprisonment at Lanka and provide consolation to them. When Hanuman demanded her permission to take vengeance on the Rakshasas in retribution, she is said to have pointed out to him that if the law of retribution were to prevail, let alone herself even Rama, Bharatha and Lakshmana would have to be brought under its perview one way or the other and that none was above board. She always believed in mercy and forgiveness quite consistent with her dominant attribute of Kripā. Pāratantrya, absolute submission to the will of the Lord is illustrated in her second separation from the Lord. After the washerman's story, Sita could have ended her life. But she obeyed the command of her Lord and went to the forest. Ananyarhatva, the sense of belonging exclusively to the Lord as His possession is again well explained in her third and last separation from the Lord, when she called upon Mother Earth to take her back. She proved her absolute loyalty to her Lord by giving proof for her chastity. That she lived for him and followed His will are well manifested both in the presence of the Lord and also in her separation from the Lord. Ramayana also illustrates how Sita (the embodiment of Lakshmi) exhibited acts of Purushakara towards Lakshmana during her association with the Lord and towards Ravana and his hordes during her separation from the Lord. Now the controversial question arises: When God Himself is ultimately the Saviour of all, why is a Purushakara required? It is pointed out that the act of mediation is required to intercede on behalf of the sinner when the Chetana

is in need of forgiveness while retribution is staring him in the face as the only just and correct reward for all his sins. Normally the Purushakara is required for the salvation of man, to bring down on him the Mercy of God for all his sins and to secure for him God's bountiful grace for final redemption. Of course there are rare occasions when God Himself even without the mediation of Lakshmi has bestowed His grace and saved the soul, as He is absolutely independent and knows things better than even Lakshmi. For instance the best illustration of Prapatti as an example for Divine Voluntary grace, is provided in the Bhagavadgita when God out of His utmost consideration for Arjuna Himself played all the roles of Acharya, Purushakara and Rakshaka, (the teacher, the mediator and the saviour all in one, God Himself undertook to be). As an Acharya he enlightened him on the Jivatma and Paramatma Svarupas as also on Karma, Jnana and Bhakti yogas. He gave him the carama sloka as a lever to Prapatti and He assured him of His grace. But normally Prapatti requires the mediation of Lakshmi not only to lead the soul to God but also to make the Lord forgive the soul and show compassion to the erring soul led by her. In His utmost mercy the Lord may even reveal at the sinner and because of his sins He may volunteer to save him making sins of the sinner themselves a springboard for His saving grace (Also a soul saved is a gain to the master). That is why it is admitted that there is absolutely no stipulation of place, time, species, caste or sex for Prapatti. Vibhishana, a Rakshasa has done it. Even animals have done it let alone men and women. So also there is no stipulation of purushartha for prapatti. Draupadi performed Prapatti when she was unclean. Arjuna did it on the battlefield. The crow and the snake (Kāka and Kaliya) did Prapatti. Dharmaraja made Prapatti for his kingdom; Draupadi for clothes; Kakasura for life; Gajendra for Kainkarya etc. etc. Whatever be the ends desired (Provided they are not bad or harmful to others) they are absolutely fulfilled in Prapatti. Prapatti may be performed by any towards any end. But it is wise that Prapatti should be made for the realisation of the Parama-Purushartha - the supreme end of Moksha. Moksha in

terms of the essential nature of the self namely Dasya - to be in constant attendance on the Lord and do Kainkarya to Him in His heavenly abode - Nitya-Vaikunta. One should seek for redemption from rebirth and samsara. One should think of returning home, the heavenly abode of the Father where real bliss is found. Of course for men on earth, the Pancaratras have provided the best place for performing Prapatti, in the form of idols and consecrated images in temples where Lord's presence is brought about along with Lakshmi's also. In the Arca vigraha the Lord has disdained His glory, forgets the insults of man, forgives all his failings and provides His holy feet for the Prapanna to prostrate and recline his head upon. The Dvaya mantra clearly states the very simple logistics of Prapatti:

Srimannarayana Caranau Śaranam prapadye - It is absolute self-surrender at the holy feet of the Lord in company with SRI.

Srimate Narayanaya namah - Surrender of all to Him the Lord with SRI - NAMAH - nothing of mine anymore. Salutations to HIM.

So far as the Prapanna is concerned it is impossible to conceive of Narayana as without Lakshmi.

'Srimannarayana' and 'Srimate Narayanaya' are significant in themselves. The Pancaratras are clear on the Personality of Lakshmi or SRI. She is described as 'Vishnu Sakti' (chap. IV - and Purushi Ratri - in this thesis). She is the Matrix of all that is CIT and ACIT and therefore she is the Mediatrix. In the chain of emanations portrayed in the pancaratras she is the first emanation so to say and therefore she may be considered the Matrix. As having come out of the Lord, she is separate from the Lord. At the same time her links with the Lord are deeply rooted or we may say more deeply rooted. Alavandar in praise of Lakshmi has composed a separate poem of 4 slokas known as 'Catuh Sloki' - and has thereby laid the foundation for works on Sri Tattva such as those of ALVAN, Bhattar and Vedanta Desika. Parasara Bhatta referring to Lakshmi says:

'Tadantarbhāvātvām na prithagabidhatte srutirapi' -

The Dvaya mantra referring to Narayana as 'Srimat' is a clear pointer to this fact. At the same time the most mootable point for discussion is this:

Can Lakshmi be conceived as on a par with the Lord in certain ways as having the capacities for Jagatkaranatva, Vibhutva and Mokshapradatva? It is true that by some free will 'Kasmaccit svatantryat' (of course consistent with the will of the Lord) she has darted out of Para Brahman and that by her Kriya Sakti and Bhuti Sakti the entire universe of matter and souls are evolved, according to the Pancaratras. At the same time how can the Pancaratras say that she is on a par with Brahman? They don't. She is not. Lakshmi Tantra says there is only Avinobhava or Samanvaya as between the sunshine and the sun. Lakshmi is only an aspect of Brahman, Brahma's sakti -

'Pranarupo Vishnoh sankalpah' -

She is an emissary of the Lord as she is only an emission from the Lord according to the Pancaratras. But the Lord is more than Lakshmi and Lakshmi is only an infenitesimal part of the Lord.

'Jagattayā lakshyamānā sā Lakshmi r iti gīyate'-

We may even say she is the Vicereine bearing of royal authority of Vishnu. But she is essentially a Sesha of the Lord. Merely because certain powers are delegated to her, it does not mean she has *Antharbhāva* in 'Isvara koti' in the same way she has *Antharbhāva* in 'Jiv koti'. The first to display Seshatva, Paratantrya and Ananyarhatva is Lakshmi herself as she leads the entire Jiva koti and so to say she is the first citizen of the Lord's Realm. That she is separate from the Lord is clear in the Pancaratras. Lakshmi herself perhaps resents any undue preroga tives and privileges thrust on her by her admirers, the fellow-jivas. By her Bhavya and Bhavaka śaktis (as portrayed in the pancaratras) delegated to her by the Lord, she pervades the entire universe - (Sarvagā) with Him. But we cannot stretch our

imagination to say that she pervades the Lord too. It is impossible - It will be chicanery of thought. So also because of her bhāvyabhāvaka sakti, she may be *secondarily* responsible for the entire manifest Universe, the Jagat (according to some Pancaratra samhitas). But she cannot be called Jagatkarana vastu in the last resort. It will be a patent insult to the Lord and incongruous in the context of Himself being the Upadana karana and Nimittakarana of the entire manifold of Cit and Acit in the context of the triumvirate ultimate concepts of Cit, Acit and Isvara. Because the Leela-Vibhuti is brought about for her sake and by her agency too by the Lord, because she is the mother and the matrix in a way, she is in the role of the mediatrix on behalf of the souls and more so on behalf of the erring souls. Because the Lord loves her so much He condescends to forget His strict sense of Justice and inclines to be kind and considerate to the souls. Her portfolio is correctly defined as that of Purushakara and how can the Purushakara possess the power of Moksha pradatva? It is impossible. The supreme powers all rest in the Lord as Lakshmi herself rests in the Lord. The status of Lakshmi as next to the Lord Himself is incontrovertible. But she is separate from the Lord although she is in communion with Him always (Anapayini). She permeates the Universe with the Lord (Yatha sarvagato Vishnuh tathaiveyam, Dvijottama!). But she cannot permeate Isvara although she can be in communion with Him.

In Prapatti, there is no doubt, manifestation of grace is Lord's own sweet will. It cannot be compelled by the individual's austerities, piety and self-efforts. Otherwise why should there be the need for purushakara by Lakshmi? Even there, Lakshmi can only recommend, appeal, coax but not compel. Grace cannot be bargained for by offer of Bhakti. Voluntary free grace of the Lord is God's own free gift to man. It is always there ever exhuding from the Lord, because God in association with Lakshmi is ever worried about the safety and well-being of the souls and in fact more for the worse sinners. (God is aware of the freedom of will in the individual souls, their

association with Prakriti and their propensities for monkeying with that freedom). Now the differences between a Prapanna and any other ordinary soul or a non-prapanna is just this, that the prapanna has removed in himself all the 'Virodhis' for the easy flow of God's grace. How the way is cleared for the inflow of God's grace in the case of the prapanna, is the question. Obviously by removing all obstructions in the way. The next question is : What are the obstructions? The sense of Ahamkara and Mamakara, ignorance about the innate Svarupa of one's own self that it is essentially Paratantra, absolutely dependent on God and God alone, that it is ananyarhasesha and that it exists for the Seshin only, ignorance about the Paramapurushartha which lies in absolute service, Kainkarya to God alone and none else, ignorance about the true nature of Śaranāgati that it lies in the special sacrifice or endowment or dedication to God Himself of the *three* namely Phala samarpana, Bhara samarpana and Svarupa samarpana too etc. The act of self-surrender, Prapatti is *Sadhyopaya* - and the Lord to whom it is made is *Siddhopaya*. There is no doubt about it. Is self-effort required to prepare the ground or not for God's grace to flow in? If this question is asked we have to admit it is necessary though in all humidity we may say even Siddhopaya is due to God's grace itself. That is what a honest Prapanna, in all love, devotion and dedication to God feels. But should he not work for it, should he not sincerely put forth voluntary efforts in that direction?

'Svamin Svasesham Svavaśam Svabhavatvena Nirbharam'

'Svadatta Svadhiyā Svartham Svasmin nyasyasi mām Svyam'

Let alone Vedanta Desika emphasising it. Even the Pancaratras emphasise it. In fact the scheme of Prapatti as delineated in the Pancaratras consists of six angas:

1. Ānukulya Samkalpa
2. Prātikulya Varjana
3. Mahāvisvasa

4. Kārpanya
5. Goptritva Varana
6. Atma Nikshepa.

Anukulasya sankalpah pratikulyasya varjanam,

Rakshishyatīti visvaso Goptritvavaranam tathā,

Ātma-nikshepa Kārpanye Shadvidhā Śaranāgatih'.

(Ahirb. samhita. XXXVII.37-38).

Ānukulya : When the individual's mind is purged of all egoism, it will be attuned to the redemptive purpose of the Rakshaka.

Pratikulya-Varjanam: Renouncing all that is unsatisfactory and repugnant to the Lord.

Visvasa : Absolute Faith and Trust in the saving grace of the Lord as the Universal Rakshaka - unshakable confidence in Prapatti.

Karpanya : The feeling of utter unworthiness and helplessness leading to perfect humility.

Goptritvavarana : Seeking the grace of God as the only refuge.

Atma-Nikshepa: It is giving back the Self to the OWNER, SVARUPA TYĀGA.

It is completely 'Nāmah' - 'nothing of mine - everything thine' - Even God's saving act is due to God's unlimited grace. Everything is a Thyaga to God, a dedication to God including the very Self of the individual. It is absolute Svarupa Tyaga to God. To wipe the slate clean of everything of MAMA and therein re-write 'NAMAH' requires not only effort in the direction of Śama and Dama, but also the abhimana of Acarya. Śama is obviously controlling the passions arising out of contact with the senses. Dama is control of the inward senses. With absolute self control both inwards and outwards the aspirant has

to seek a Guru - a teacher. The aspirant for Prapatti has certain ethical sanctions and spiritual disciplines to be followed:

1. He should not love his body much as it encourages 'Ahamkara' and 'Vishaya pravanya' - Egoity and attachment to the senses.

2. Attachment to one's own blood relations, kith and kin should be gradually given up.

3. Every other Srivaishnava is to be regarded as a true 'Bandhu'.

4. Should adore God as his true Father.

5. Should truly honour and adore the Acharya.

6. Should love his own disciple as a lover loves his beloved.

7. Should always ponder over the soul and not the body.

8. Should emulate the wisdom and 'anushtana' of the great devotees of the Lord.

9. Should respect and worship the God in temples.

10 Should be free from all unworthy desires.

11. Should love and revere God and the elders.

12. Should be restrained in food habits and should always be in good company.

A seeker of Prapatti Marga should have the greatest devotion not only to God but also to the Acharya. That is the essence of the message of 'Srivacana bhushana'.

1. He must feel that his only abode is either God's or Guru's.

2. His only language must be the praise of his acharya and of God.

3. His only prayer - Recounting the lives of the great devotees of God, the Alvars and Acharyas.

4. He must strictly abide by the precepts of the Purvacharyas.

5. He must avoid the association of anti-Srivaishnavas.

6. He must always be thinking of Kainkarya to Acharya and God in every one of his doings. He must keep away from the many forbidden acts : such as cruelty to others, flattery of others, voluptuousness, theft, uttering falsehoods, eating forbidden food, etc. He should not for a moment think of God the Supreme on a par with the many other minor deities. He must never for a moment entertain the idea that the Avatars are just human beings exaggerated to God's status and that they are not really God's incarnations. He must never do anything inconsistent with his Varnasrama dharma. He must never let his mind to examine the composition of the Arca vigrahas. He must never for a moment even imagine that the soul is independent of God. He must never attempt to expropriate God's property or any other public property. He should never allow ahamkara (pride), artha (avarice) or kama (lust). He should never denounce the Acaryas of offend the Bhagavatas, the devotees of God.

The worst possible sin for which there is no excuse is Bhagavatapachara - sinning against God's devotees. God Himself has undertaken Avatars to punish the offenders against His devotees. It is heinous and atrocious to distinguish between one devotee of God and an other on grounds of caste, cleanliness or sex. Often it is admitted a devotee, bhagavata of a so-called low-born caste is definitely at an advantage over the so-called superior brahmin devotee. The latter has the innate ahamkara of his superiority of birth and is inclined to follow Karma-Jnana-Bhakti instead of the most simple and easiest attitude of Saranagati as he thinks he has the necessary qualification by his birthright of superior intelligence and samskara. In this gusto of pride he may even look down on Saranagati as the only road of the unfortunate and the helpless. Even otherwise his superior birth entails him in the strict observance of nitya-naimittika karmas becoming of his Varna and that much of time is unfortunately lost for him for the prayerful adoration of God the Supreme and meditation on Him. However unclean or haggard a bhagavatha may look in the exterior and to all outward intents,

he has the inward purity as God is established in his heart in the Divya mangala svarupa.

'Svapacopi mahipala Vishnubhakto dvijādhikah',
'Vishnubhaktivihinastu Yatisca svapacādhamah'.

Often unfortunately many have the patent marks of Vaishnavism all in the outward show with the absence of Vishnubhakti at heart. The show mostly carries weight and carries the day ! It must be borne in mind that the moment even a candala becomes a devotee, he is reborn in this rebirth alone! There are innumerable references in the scriptures about the greatness of Bhagavatas, the devotees of God in spite of their inferiority in birth.

Sri Rama performed Brahma medha to Jatayu. Dharmaputra performed the last rites to Vidura. Several rishis waited at the doors of Dharmavyadha to get their doubt in the Vedas cleared. Sri Krishna delighted in dining at Vidura's residence. Ramachandra graciously accepted fruits at the hands of Śabari, a hunter-woman. Perianambi, Ramanuja's Guru performed Brahma medha to Maraner Nambi, a harijan saint. Ramanuja himself treated Tirukkacacinambi, a sudra disciple of Alavandar as his teacher. Ramanuja used to go to bathe in the Kaveri supporting himself on the arms of a brahmin disciple of his but on his return from the river he invariably took for his support Pillai Urangavallidesar, a Sudra. Nammalvar, Tirumangai alvar, Tiruppanalvar are classical instances of great devotees of God being inferior of birth. Andal was a lady.

Bhagavata kainkarya and Acharya kainkarya are necessary preludes to Bhagavat kainkarya. Nay, in fact they themselves constitute into Bhagavat kainkarya. In fact two types of Acharyas are distinguished :

1. Upakāraka,
2. Uttaraka.

The Upakaraka Acharya is one who imparts all the needful knowledge and shows the way to salvation.

The Uttaraka Acharya on the other hand is one who not only imparts all the necessary knowledge but also takes the disciple as it were by hand and leads him to Heaven. He is considered to be both Upaya and Upeya in himself so to say for the disciple like God Himself. Srivacana bhushana goes to the farthest limit of saying that the Acharya alone is the Saviour as he constitutes in himself the means and the end of salvation so far as the Shishya is concerned. God has *both the sense of justice and mercy* as He is Himself ultimately the Law and the Niyamaka as also the Father. But the Acharya is said to be moved only by mercy and never by the sense of justice with its tendency to award punishments. Acharya can be accepted as the means, Upaya for Salvation. But how can be accepted as the Upeya also. The instance of Śatrughna is quoted from the Ramayana. Śatrughna, one who had a victory over his enemies, the senses (as the very name indicates), it seems did all service to Bharata in preference to Rama because Rama had such a beautiful figure and personality as to attract the mind and senses of all the Jivas. Śatrughna never allowed himself to be attracted by Rama's beauty leading to Vishaya pravanya. It is further argued that if the Acharya's contact is lost the soul can never get back its virtues. It is only a lotus in water that blossoms at the Sun. On the other hand if the water has dried up, the same sun scorches the lotus out. Finally it is pointed out that Bhāgavata kainkarya is like a supporting stick that takes a creeper on to the 'Pandal' which is similar to the Acharya. The Acharya abhimana will help the soul to blossom forth in all its love and prapatti to the Lord just as the Pandal helps the tender plant to shoot forth into abundant leaves, to bud, blossom, and bear fruit too.

Bhāgavata kainkarya is considered to be a very important aspect of Bhagavat kainkarya itself.

'Yasyamurdhnisthitam yāvat Vaishnavānghrirajassubham,

Gangādi sarvatīrthāni tāvat tishtanti asamśayah'

- (Brahmanda purana).

means for redemption. There is absolutely no doubt cast in the Pancaratras, the Bhagavata and other texts on the nature of Free Voluntary flow of God's grace. God's grace can never be brought nor can it be compelled to flow by any means. It is invariably the manifestation of His Sweet Will (you may call it Capricious ! God is not bothered as He is the Sarvajna). God's grace is there ever ready to outflow towards the Cetanas because there is always Lakshmi with Him. Only Lakshmi can be the Purushakara as the Leelavibhuti is all for her. Even for Bhakti to arise in man, God's grace is to be there. The Bhagavata is also clear on this point.

That action is true and becoming of itself which pleases God - (Bhagavatha IV. 29-49).

Whatever is done for the pleasure of God gives rise to devotion and devotion promptly gives rise to knowledge' (Bhag.I.5.35).

In fact Bhagavata says XI.2.22:

'We should surrender all our actions of God without any desire for the fruits - even all our duties in terms of our station in life' -

Bhagavata again XI.10.1.

'The complete abandonment or surrender of the soul to God is the Highest Truth'- (Bhagavata VII. 6. 24).

"The milk-maids of Brindavan had Him alone in their thoughts and speech in all their bodily exertions, were full of Him and Him alone in every way".

Although God ultimately is both the Upaya and the Upeya, the means and the end, one should never wallow in delusions of God-intoxication and abandon all his responsibilities in life and living One should perform his duties with a spirit of dedication to God, in the spirit of Nishkama karma, one should seek a teacher, an Acarya, be enlightened on Tattva-Traya and one

should, to begin with, develop a love for God (Bhakti) and love for all His devotees. One's devotion should culminate in Bhakti and Bhakti should lead to Prapatti. Prapatti can be made with the help of the Three Mantras: The Tirumantra, the Dvaya and the Carama Sloka. One should be a true Srivaishnava in thought, word and deed. He should perform Ācharya kainkarya, Bhāgavata kainkarya and Bhagavat kainkarya. He should worship at temples. He must make prapatti before God in the Arca form and wait for His grace to manifest and be bestowed on him. One should wait for his turn, for God to release him from Samsara and take him back. In short one should wait for Dripta Prapatti to take its own course for God's grace. Ārta Prapatti is not given to one and all. It may be the privilege of a few mystics. It is definitely not of the ordinary. That is the message of the Pancaratras under Hita and Purushartha. That is the exact wisdom of the Bhagavata Purana. That is the recommendations for the Alvars and the Acharyas. That is exactly the road paved for the redemption of the soul in Visishtadvaitha. That is the path of God - realisation for all the Srivaishnavas whatever be their particular denominations.

That in short is the sovereign remedy prescribed by the Pancaratras for the metaphysical evils of Rebirths, Ahamkara and Avidya and for all the other ills of life.

THE OTHER AGAMAS – VAIKHANASA, SAIVA AND SAKTA

THE VAIKHANASA AGAMAS

UNLIKE the Pancaratrins, the Vaikhanasas form only a minority, although they constitute an important sect among the Vaishnavas. The origin of the Vaikhanasa agama is attributed to VIKHANAS or BRAHMA himself who is said to have revealed the Sastra through his four disciples, ATRI, MARICI, KASYAPA and BHRIGU. Many of the Vaikhanasa samhitas are printed by the Tirupathi temple authorities. A few are printed by the Vaikhanasa granthamala series, Madras. One is printed by the Trivandrum Sanskrit series No. 121. K. Sambasivasastry had edited a Vaikhanasa samhita attributed to Marici. Even Vedanta Desika has written a work on Vaikhanasa Agama.

It is said that at Vishnu's command Vikhanas came down to earth to originate worship of Vishnu in His Arca form (in the form of idols in temples). Brahma incarnated Himself as VIKHANAS in the Naimisharanya and then VISHNU Himself taught Brahma the mysteries of worship in the form of thirty two questions. Since God, the Bhagavan Himself taught this agama to Brahma first, Vishnu Himself is the originator of the Agama also as in the case of Pancaratra Agama. As it was Vikhanasa who gave this agama to the world directly through his four disciples or Maharshis, namely Atri, Marici, Kasyapa and Bhrighu, he is said to be the Pravartaka of this Agama and hence the agama is called after him.

There are four divisions in the Agama:

1. Samhita, 2. Adhikarana,
3. Tantra, 4. Khanda.

The following eight Agamas are said to have been given by Marici Maharshi, namely:

1. Jaya (Ādi). 2. Ananda, 3. Samjnana, 4. Vira
5. Vijaya, 6. Vijita, 7. Vimala, 8. Kalpa.

These eight are also called Samhitas.

The following ten as spelled out by Bhrigu Maharshi are called the Adhikaranas: namely:

1. Khila, 2. Khilādhikāra, 3. Purādhikara,
4. Vāsādhikāra, 5. Arcādhikāra, 6. Mānādhikāra,
7. Kriyādhikāra, 8. Niruktādhikāra,
9. Prakirnādhikāra, 10. Yajnādhikāra.

The following four spoken out by Atri Maharshi are called the Tantras : namely:

1. Pūrva tantra, 2. Vishnu tantra,
3. Uttara tantra, 4. Mahā tantra.

The following three Agama bhagas called KHĀNDA are said to have been given out by Kasyapa Maharshi: namely:

1. Satya khānda, 2. Karma khānda, 3. Jnāna khānda.

For all these, the Muladhara, the basic foundation is said to be the *Thirty Two Sutras* given out by Vaikhanasa Himself.

The Vaikhanasa Āgamādhikaris are also called by the name of 'GARBHA SRIVAISHNAVAS' and they require no initiation like the Saivites or the Pancaratrins. The Vaikhanasas claim that there were five million texts in support of their Agamas and they still believe that there are nearly fifty thousand texts in existence. 'Sri Lakshmi Visishtadvaita Darsana' - (Brahma Sutra) a Sariraka bhashya supports this claim and extols this Agama. Texts like - 'Daśavidha hetu nirupana'. 'Uttama - Brahma Vidyā' etc., champion the cause of Vaikhanasa Agama. As in other Vaishnava and Saiva Agamic texts, the Vaikhanasa Samhitas also explain and encourage temple art, architecture, installation

and worship of idols etc., and in fact contribute much in that direction. In every way the Vaikhanasa Agama is a Mahatantra as there is 'Mantra-Tantra - Samarasya' in it. This agama is also considered anterior to the Pancaratras.

The Vaikhanasa Agama is some times referred to as 'VAIDIKA Agama'. According to W. Caland, the Vaikhanasa sutra is the latest of the sutras of the Taittiriya Sakha. The Vaikhanasas are also called AUKHEYAS. The Smartha Sutras that preceded the Srouta Sutras consist of both Grihya and Dharma Sutras which once again include an elaborate Mantra-samhita. Therefore the Smartha-Sutra section is also called 'Aukheya-sutra' because the Vaikhanasas (Aukheyas) constituted a sākhā (branch) with the complement of Samhita, Brahmana and Sutras. Manu is also said to endorse these ideas. Barth is of the opinion that at the time of BAUDHAYANA there existed known 'pre-scripts' relating to the Vaikhanasa hermits and that these were later on edited as Vaikhanasa sutras. Baudhayana himself (who is said to have flourished before the advent of the Christian era) speaks of Vaikhanasa sastra as a guide to vānaprasthas (anchorites), There is a short resume of the Vaikhanasa sastra in the Baudhayana (III.3.3.) Haradatta while commenting on Gautama (Sutras.III.2) explains that Vaikhanasa addressed himself primarily to the order of the anchorites (vānaprasthas). As a matter of fact the Vaikhanasa Agama equally regulated the conduct of all individuals in those days. Kalidāsa perhaps referred to the mode of life prescribed in the Vaikhanasa system in the well-known verse beginning:

'Vaikhanasam Kimanayā Vratamāpradānāt'

(Act I. Shakuntala).

Obviously the Vaikhanasas underline purity of conduct (I. 22. King Dushyanta enquires whether Śakuntala was advised to observe Vaikhanasa Vrata). Although sometimes the adherents of Pancaratra and Vaikhanasa rile at each other as 'Avaidic', Vedanta Desika declares that both are authentic and have the authority of the Vedas. In fact the Vaikhanasa agama

equally regulates temple worship, lays down rules of conduct, prescribes Dikshas and Samskaras and has numerous followers among the temple Arcakas in particular.

There are in fact innumerable references to the Vaikhanasas in the Cola inscriptions from the time of Raja Raja I. These Vaikhanasas used to be hereditary trustees of Vaishnava temples, managing the temple properties and administering the divine services. In fact Caland on philological and linguistic grounds refers to the Vaikhanasa sutras as belonging to the period of the latter half of the 3rd century A.D. Even to this day there are many temples in the south that follow the Vaikhanasa Agama tradition and the most notable examples is the Tirupati shrine. Although all around Tirupati the Pancaratra form of worship is there (even in Tiruchanur), Lord Venkateswara in His sanctum sanctorum is worshipped according to the Vaikhanasa rites and śāstra, purely in the sanskrit medium. Sometimes it is claimed that there are more temples under the Vaikhanasa agamic order in the South of India than there are under the Pancaratra!

There is absolutely no differences between the Vaikhanasa and the Pancaratra agamas, in so far as the PARA, the ultimate being is concerned. Like the Pancaratra samhitas, the Vaikhanasa agama samhitas also emphasise the five forms of the supreme namely:

PARA, VYUHA, VIBHAVA, ANTARYAMI and ARCA.

The Vaikhanasas lay the greatest emphasis on His ARCA from which He has assumed for the sake of the devotees in particular and for mankind at large. Even the Alwars of the Pancaratra tradition may sometimes say - 'Why visit different shrines when the Lord who is worshipped in them dwells within the heart? But the Vaikhanasa agama lays exclusive emphasis on the worship of Arca Murthi as a *Must*. God is said to descend in a non-material form into the Image and ever remains there helping the devotees to achieve liberation. The Vaikhanasas place great emphasis on ARCA. In fact the Vaikhanasa agama does not accord worship to the Alwars, Acharyas, Pontiffs and

Matadhipatis or the Bhagavatas even (although the images of Alwars and Acharyas are of late found installed in many of the temple precincts under the Vaikhanasa agama). The followers of the Vaikhanasa agama do not permit themselves to be branded with the emblems of the Conch and Discus - (Tapta - mudra) as the Pancaratrins do, as they call themselves 'Garbha-Srivaishnavas' and do not require initiation by an Acharya. They don't recite the Tamil prabandham at all during worship of God. They do of course accept the ultimate tri umvirate of CIT, ACIT, and ISVARA, the TATTVATRAYA. At the same time unlike the Tenkalai sect they do not categorise Lakshmi under the Jivatma, even as a glorified CIT (jivatma). Rather they give the utmost importance and prominence to SRI as the power of the Supreme namely NARAYANA. As in Pancaratra in the Vaikhanasa also VISHNU is the Supreme Being 'Vishal Vyāptau' - according to this Dhatu He is the Ultimate Tattva that is all encompassing, both imminent and transcendent. He is the Parama Purusha of the Purusha Sukta and the Ṇarayana of the Upanishads.

'Yacca Kincijjagatyasmin driśyate srūyatepi vā'

'Antarbahisca Tatsarvam Vyāpya Narayanah sthitah' -

'Sabrahmah Sa Sivah Sa Harih Sendrah Sokṣharah -

Paramah Svarat' -

This Narayana is both NISHKALA and SAKALA. The cosmic body (Visvadeha) of God the Supreme (Viradrupi) assumes the form of the Temple-the Nirguna Daivi Tejas reflected in Sugana Murti - That experienced is Brahmananda.

'Deho Devālayah proktah Jivo Devassanātanah'

'Tyajedajnana Nirmalyam Sohambhavena Pujayet' -

Śankara bhagavatpada is said to have respected the Vaikhanasa Agamas! although he disagreed with the Pancaratras.

This Narayana manifests Himself every where in both these aspects. His consort SRI or LAKSHMI is His Vibhuti or AISVARYA called Nityananda. She is also referred to as Sakti

or 'Mula Prakriti'. She assumes different forms to suit the different Lila-Samkalpas (Sportful volitions) of the Lord of Vishnu. This Lakshmi, the Power incarnate of the Lord projects, brings about the Universe of Spirit and Matter, Cetana and Acetana. Acetana, Acit is admitted to be eight-fold in the Vaikhanasa agama. (Panca bhutas, Manas, Buddhi and Ahamkara).

Lakshmi is said to be invariably associated with Vishnu in all His five forms of manifestations namely Para,Vyuha, Vibhava, Antaryami and Arca, according to the Vaikhanasa. According to this Agama, the Supreme Principle is not bare Narayana, but Narayana always with SRI. The performer of the Vaikhanasa sutra rituals should be an out and out Narayana Parāyana, it is further ordained.

The Vaikhanasa agama says that the PARA is always realised through Jnana. Just as five (Arani) is generated by the constant churning of the sami wood, so also the unmanifest PARA is made manifest for one by constant meditation, of course helped by devotion (Bhakti). By means of Prāṇāyāma and meditation the same God Para may be realised as the Antaryamin (the indweller in the heart of man). As in the Pancaratra the Vaikhanasa - agama also upholds Bhakti and Prapatti, as the master keys to open the flood gates of Lord's abundant Mercy and Grace.

Thus we can easily observe that the Pancaratras and the Vaikhanasa do not differ much at all in their Tattva, Hita and Purushartha. Of course there are some minor differences in details of worship and approach to divinity. For instance with reference to the Parivāra Devatas, their dispositions and descriptions, there is difference between the two schools. Also the Vaikhanasas do not elevate ANDAL, to the level of God's 'Nacchiyar', His consort in the same way as they don't extol or elevate the Alwars and Acharyas to a level beyond their desert from God's point of view.

Anyway the Vaikhanasa agamas with their Srauta, Agamic and Smartha literature, their Sutras, mantras and techniques of iconography and temple architecture are complementary and supplementary to the Pancaratra agamas in more than one way. It is admitted anyhow that the Vaikhanasas were Vanaprasthas once, a small endogamons sect living in the forests who later migrated into the villages and towns in the Andhra, Tamil and Kannada countries with the Agaṃa sastra. Though the Agama does not have a rigorous, consistent and systematic philosophy of its own in the sense in which the Pancaratra agama has, yet it has a good following among many of the Archakas, the temple priests as a community. That Narayana is both Nishkala and Sakala is hard to swallow. It is a lie. The myth of Narayana being Nishkala is exploded already by the Pancaratra agamas. Even at the time of the great deluge, all the great attributes are in Narayana, in an unmanifest condition, in liberation so to say. Otherwise they cannot manifest themselves at a later stage. Further the souls are never born and they have consequently no terminations of their existence in the sense of being absorbed in Brahman. There is no question of 'Sohambhāva' even at the time of liberation for the individual soul. Sālokhya and Sāyujya simply point out that however similar and soul may be when liberated, it is dependent on the Lord and yet separate from Him. Brahmananda is just the joy of being near God and in service of Him and never in unisi on or identity with Him or in Him. That is impossible and contradictory to the very notion of the Ultimate Tattvas that constitute the philosophy of Srivaishnavism and any metaphysics worth the name. Even wavering on the lines of Vaikhanas in regard to the Tattvas leads to all sorts of complications and finally to self-contradiction. The Vaikhanasa agama can have the significance of its rituals and worship fulfilled if only the philosophy of the Pancaratras is accepted in toto. Whatever Jnana and Yoga may yield in the form of Bliss, it is all temporary and in the nature of relapse. It is only Bhakti, Prema, Dāsya and Prapatti that can restore the individual soul to its original condition of eternal joy without any relapse, in its native land of the abode of GOD.

THE SAIVA AGAMAS

SAIVISM, the religion of the worship of Siva is as old as the Vedas. The Supreme person in Saivism is called RUDRA or SIVA, Rudra referring to His terrific aspect and Siva referring to His benign aspect. In the Sata Rudriya both aspects are emphasised and praised. The Kenopanishad points out how Siva is the Supreme Godhead and describes how His glory was revealed by Goddess Uma and Indra. The most important of the Saiva upanishads is of course the Svetasvatara upanishad. The Mahabharata refers to the worship of Siva. Just as the Vaishnava Agamas expose a blend of the spiritual ideas of the vedic seers along with the intuitions of the South Indian Alwars and Acharyas, so also the Saivagamas reveal a similar admixture of the insight of the Vedic seers along with the intuitions of the Nayanars of the South. The excavations at Harappa and Mohenjodaro have proved that the worship of Siva and Sakti have been in existence from the hoary past. There is no doubt that the Vedic concepts have been amalgamated into the Saiva cult in the same way as they have been incorporated into the Vaishnava religion. It is not desirable here to enter into a controversy whether the Sumerian culture was Aryan or Dravidian, whether the Sumerian Saiva cult migrated into the South of India and so on and so forth. There are of course the 28 Saivagamas. The Pasupata cult is considered to be a very ancient cult in India. The Pasupata philosophy is referred to even in the Mahabharata along with the Pancaratra, Samkhya, Yoga and even Vedanta. The Vedanta sutras also refer to it. There is the North Indian Saivism as represented in Kashmir Saivism; the authorities for this Northern school of Saivism are of course the Agamas, the Siva sutras with the commentary called Vimarshini, the Spandakarikas and the Pratyabhijna

sastra. Abhinava Guptacharya is one of the greatest writers on the Monistic aspect of Northern Saivism. The Pancākshara Mantra is definitely a gift of the North. South Indian Saivism culminates in Saiva Siddhanta. The TEVARAM and the TIRUVACAKAM are its best illustrations. The destruction of the sacrifice of Daksha is referred to in the Tevaram and the Tiruvacakam. Even Ravana of Lanka is described in the Ramayana as an ardent worshipper of Siva. The blend of both the Northern and the Southern schools of Saivism is well evident even at the time of the Saiva Samayacharyas.

The Agamas divide the Saiva system into 4 groups namely:
SAIVA, PASUPATA, SOMA and LAKULA.
Saiva is further subdivided into
Vama, Dakshina, Misra and Siddhanta.

The well-known divisions under the Saivagamas also called the Mahesvaragamas are the following:

1. THE PASUPATA SCHOOL:

The Pasupatha sutras and writings attributed to Haridattacharya and Lakulisa (Nakulisa) are considered authoritative works of this school. Sri Sankaracharya attacked the Pasupata doctrine in his commentary on the Sutra :

'PATYURASĀMANJASYAT' - in the Brahma sutras. But some defenders of the Pasupata system say that he remonstrated only against the Advaidic Pasupata system but not the Vaidika Pasupata system. Such sub-divisions of the Pasupata system are of course admitted by Appayya Dikshita in his commentary 'Parimala'.

2. THE SIDDHANTA OR SAIVA SIDDHANTA SCHOOL:

This is the religion followed by many Tamilians in particular in the South. The well-known 28. Saivagamas are the authoritative works. Among them the Kamika, the Karana, Suprabheda and the Vatula agamas are considered specially authoritative. Neelakanta's bhashya on the Vedanta sutras is

usually referred to as the Saiva Visishtadvaita. Veerasaivism is another very important Southern school of Saivism. Very popular in the Karnataka. It has its own extensive literature in Kannada.

'Veda sārah Śivāgamah' - The fat content in the milk of the Vedas is the 'Sivagama'. The Saivagamas are enumerated as 28 in number.

1. Kāmikas,	2. Yogaja,	3. Acintya,
4. Karana,	5. Ajita,	6. Dipta,
7. Sūkshma,	8. Sāhasra,	9. Amśumān,
10. Suprabheda,	11. Vijaya,	12. Niśvāsa,
13. Svāyambhuva,	14. Anala,	15. Vīra,
16. Raurava,	17. Makuta,	18. Vimala
19. Candrajnāna,	20. Bimba,	21. Prodgīta,
22. Lalita,	23. Siddha,	24. Santāna,
25. Śarva,	26. Pāramesvara,	27. Kirana
28. Vatula,		

Suta Samhita says:

Kāmikādyā Vātulāntā Śivenoktā Śivāgamāh
Vedamārgabhidāyitvāt Siddhāntākhyā Śivāgamah,
Tripadārtham Catushpādam Mahātantram Jagatpatih,
Proktvān Himavatputryai. Dharmān Mokshaika Sādhanām -

The twenty-eight Kamikadhi agamas are revealed by Paramesvara Himself through His five faces:

The first five beginning with Kamikagama are said to have been given from His Sadyojata face, the next five beginning with Dīptādi from His Vamadeva face, the next five beginning with Vijaya from His Aghora face, the next five beginning with Raurava from His Tatpurusha face and the rest of the eight beginning with Prodgita from His Isana face.

These twenty eight are also called Samhitas or Mahātantras.

The first ten Samhitas are said to have been given by Sadasiva to the DASA SIVAS such as Vidyesvara, Pranava, Suddha, Dipta, etc. They are therefore called SIVA BHEDA or SIVA SAMHITAS. The next eighteen Samhitas from Vijaya to Vatula are said to have been revealed to the eighteen Rudras such as Anadi Rudra and they are called RUDRA BHEDA or RUDRA SAMHITAS.

These twenty-eight Saivagamas are also called MULA Samhitas. Apart from these Mula samhitas there are also said to be 208 Upagamas. Every one of the Agama Samhitas is in 4 Padas or parts: namely:

1. Jnana pada, 2. Yoga pada,
3. Kriya pada, 4. Carya pada.

(Similar to the Pancaratra Agamas).

1. JNANA PADA:

Unless one has the knowledge of Siva Tattva one cannot attain Siva jnana.

Pati, Pasu and Pasa are the triple Tattvas, the ultimate three Padarthas of Saivagama. The Jivatman is the PAŚU, the bondage of Samsara that has entailed him (the Jivatman) is the PĀŚA. The person who disentangles him (liberates) from the Samsara Pāsa is SIVA, the PATI. That which enlightens one on these triple Tattvas is the Jnanapada.

2. YOGA PADA:

The means of attaining Sivajnana is the Yoga Pada. By means of purifying the body, by means of Pranayama and other yogic practices, oneness with Siva (Sivaikya) can be realised.

3. KRIYA PADA:

Constructing temples according to Vastu Sastra and in accordance with the principles laid down in the Agama sastras,

preparing, installing and worshipping idols that help to realise in practice the ultimate triple Tattvas- all these belong to Kriya pada.

4. CARYA PADA:

The good conduct and behaviour required to earn Sivajnana, Jnana, Bhakti and Prapatti - all constitute the Carya pada.

To practise Sivajnana and follow the Saivagamas, one has to be initiated according to the rules, Diksha Karma in terms of his Sakha, Sutra, Gotra and personal merit also. The Saivagamas enjoin that practice of the Agamas without being initiated properly is like sowing in a barren soil.

From Siva to man in the order of the Tutor-Taught series, the Saivagamas announce six orders:

PARA, MAHAN, ANTARALA, DIVYA, DIVYĀ -DIVYA and ADIVYA.

Just as the Agamas have enunciated the Ultimate Triple Tattvas of PATI, PA ŚU and PĀŚA, they have also pronounced the 36 tattvas (SHATTHRIMSA Tattva) as constituting the manifest Universe namely:

1. SIVA	2. SAKTI	3. SADASIVA
4. ISVARA	5. SUDDHAVIDYA	6. MAYA
7. KALA,	8. VIDYA,	9. RAGA,
10. KALA,	11. NIYATI,	12. PURUSHA,
13. PRAKRITI,	14. BUDDHI,	15. AHAMKARA,
16. MANAS,	17. SROTRA,	18. TVAK,
19. CAKSHUS,	20. JIHVĀ,	21. GHRANA,
22. VAK,	23. PANI,	24. PADA,
25. PAYU,	26. UPASHTA,	27. SABDA,
28. SPARSHA,	29. RUPA,	30. RASA,
31. GANDHA,	32. AKASA,	33. VAYU,
34. VAHNI,	35. JALA,	36. BHUMI.

These are also called the 'Tattva Sandohas' in Saivagama.

Because of Anushtana bheda (upasana bheda) there are 4 internal sub-divisions in Saivagama namely:

1. Saivagama,
2. Devyagama or Saktagama,
3. Vatulagama or Tantrikagama,
4. Veerasaivagama

In Saivagamas details of worshipping and taking processions of the deity where importance is given to Chamundi and other Sakti Devatas are explained under Sakti Utsava Vidhi patala as also in Katyayini Tantra and other Upagamas. Ordinarily they categorise all such under Devyagama or Śaktagama.

In many Siva kshetras, the latter aspect of Saivagama namely Vatulagama is practised from times immemorial.

In some other Saivagamas, in the earlier half there is the discourse on Saiva dharmacarana and in the latter half there is the description of Veerasaiva dharmacarana.

'Siddhantakhye mahatantra Kāmikādye Śivod'te' -

'Nirdishta muttare bhage Veerasaiva matah param' -

About initiation into Siva diksha 7 types are mentioned in the Saivagamas according to the individual capacities of the persons namely:

1. Anadi Saiva, 2. Adi Saiva, 3. Maha Saiva,
4. Anu Saiva, 5. Avantara Saiva, 6. Anya Saiva,
7. Veera Saiva.

The principal heads of Saivagamas, those who are properly initiated according to Siva's Sadyojata face', who are proficient in Vedagamas and follow the traditions of Kasyapa, Bharadvaja, Gautama, Agastya etc., who are yajussakha Bodhayana sutravalambis, are usually called the Adi Saivas. The rest that are initiated, wear Bhasma, Rudraksha, recite Siva mantras and do japams are called Mahasaivas, Anu saivas, Avantara saivas, Anya saivas etc. according to their individual merits.

The Veerasaivas are these who do not worship any other except Siva and who are constantly absorbed in 'Sivaikya jnana' and 'Sivajivaikya bodhaka Vidya' only.

In the text 'Vatula Suddhakhya' - Saivamata is classified into four.

1. Samanya saiva, 2. Misra saiva,
3. Suddha saiva, 4. Veera saiva.

The definition of Veerasaivism is given as follows:

'Viśabdenocyate vidyā Sivajivaikya bodhinī'
'Tasyām ramante ye śaivāḥ Veerasaivastu te matāh'
' Vedanta janyam yad jnānam Vidyeti parikīrtyate'
'Vidyāyam ramatetasyām Veera ityabhidiyate'
'Vītarāgādidoshatvat atmatattva vicāraṇāt'
'Vikalpānalpa sunyatvāt veerasaivamiti smritam'.

The southern Saiva siddhanta system is firmly based on SIVA as the Supreme Being. He is the PATI or the lord of the PASU or the Jivas. These Pasus are in bondage, PASA. It is only the Pati and His grace that can remove this Pasa, bondage of Maya in the Pasus and help them attain liberation.

God is omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent. He is perfect in every way. He has the five faces - Sadyojata, Vamadeva, Aghora,Tatpurusha and Isana, providing shelter to the five Kalas such as Niyati, Vidya, Pratishta, Santi and Ṣantyatita. He is adorned with the 6 wealths or attributes of Sarvajnatva, Nityatriptatva, Anadi, Bodhatva, Svatantratva, Alupta saktitva and Ananta saktitva. He performs the five duties Srishti, Sthiti, Samhara, Tirodhana, and Anugraha (creation, preservation, destruction, obscuration and illumination - favour-) in the forms and persons of Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra, Mahesvara, and Sadasiva. He always blesses His devotees.

Saiva siddhanta refers to 'ANAVA MALA'. Anava is the root principle of obscuration (similar to Avidya and Ahamkara).

That beguiles the soul to identity itself with the body and get overwhelmed by craving and desires, of the senses. In fact Saiva siddhanta makes mention of the 'MUMMALAS' - the three malas of Ānava, Māyika and Kārmika. The soul under the stress of Karma goes forth from birth to birth wandering amidst the manifoldness of things. It has to free itself from Karma, Maya and Anava - the three Malas that are Anadi and that constitute the Pasa for the Pasu.

Anavamala limits the soul's omniscience - pratibandha,

Mayikamala limits the omnipresence of the soul and confines it to the body - Sambhanda.

Karmikamala limits the soul to desires and enjoyments of the senses - Anubandha.

The souls are said to be of three grades:

Vijnana kala - those that have Anavamala alone in them,

Pralaya kala - those that have Anava and Karmika malas,

Sakala - those that have all the three malas, Anava, Karmika and Mayika.

The end and aim of all embodies souls is to get rid of Pasa and attain the Pati. The disciplines required to be followed for ridding oneself of the Mummalas are Carya, Kriya, Yoga and Jnana. Apart from God's grace (Arul sakti) which is absolutely necessary, help of the GURU is equally necessary. It is the Guru that gives the Diksha - initiation, instruction and fulfilment by training in terms of the following six:

1. Kataksha
2. Sparsha
3. Mental purification
4. Teachings
5. Mantra
6. Yoga.

In fact the eighth stanza in the Raurava agama explains how the guru leads the aspiring soul to God-realisation. Tapas is the means of liberation and consists of Carya, Kriya and Yoga. Carya refers to acts of temple ritual and worship. Kriya refers to

individual worship and prayer yoga is meditation and Jnana is God-consciousness.

Carya leads to Salokya, Kriya to Samipya, Yoga to Sarupya and Jnana to Sayujya. They are also called Dasamarga, Satputramarga, Sakhamarga and Sanmarga. Saint Tayumanavar compares the four to a bud, a blossom, an unripe fruit and a ripe fruit respectively.

The ninth stanza in the Rauravagama says the Pancakshara mantra 'Om Namah Sìvaya' - will lead to Jnana which finally leads to God-realisation. The tenth stanza says that by attaining oneness in God Pasa will be destroyed. The soul becomes a Jivanmukta and though still continuing in the body which is the result of Prarabda karma does not have any other birth as all its karmas are burnt away by jnana. The 11th stanza describes union with God in bliss and the last stanza enjoins that the liberated soul in its Jivanmukta state should worship Sivajnana and Sivalinga as Siva Himself. In beatitude though the soul is said to be one with God, yet it is separate from God, just as in daytime the light of the stars is included in the light of the sun and is indistinguishable from it, but *yet separate from it.* We can realise God only when Pasu jnana is transfigured by the divine light, Patijnana. Just as God by His Iccha sakti and Kriya sakti evolves the universe, so also by His Jnanasakti He provides liberation to the bound souls. Although the Saiva siddhanta does not admit of Divine incarnation (Avatara) in the Vaishnava sense, it admits of the truth of Divine manifestation. In fact Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra and Sadasiva are considered to be the presiding deities of A, U, Ma, BINDU and NADA in the Pranavá.

Though the great outpourings of Appar, Sundarar, Sambhandar and Manikya vacagar contain the truths of Saiva philosophy in a popular and beautiful form, it is the 'Siva jnana bodham' of MEYAKAṆDAR that states clearly and precisely in twelve sutra stanzas the entire philosophy of Saivagama. Sivajnana siddhi is the erudite commentary on Sivajnana

bodham, by Arulnandi Sivachariar. A well-known Tamil stanza says that the Veda is the cow, Agama is the milk given by the cow, the Tevaram and the Tiruvacakam given to the world by the 4 saints (Appar, Sundarar, Sambandhar and Manikya vacakar) are the ghee got from the milk and that the Sivajnana bodham is the sweetness in the ghee.

Like the Pancaratras, the Saivagamas also claim equal authority of the Agamas with the Vedas. Saint Tirumular says in 'Tirumandiram' that the Vedas along with the agamas form the Truth. 'Vedamodu agamam veyyam' - Of course unlike the Vedas, the agamas are open for study by the people of the 4th estate also. Srikanta in his Bhashya on the Vedanta sutras says:

'Vayantu Veda Sivagamayoh bhedam na pasyamah'

The three cardinal features of Saiva siddhanta are:

1. The Saints of Saivism are drawn from all castes and classes. The 63 Nayanars consist of men and women, of kings and peasants, of Brahmins and the so-called untouchable (similar to the Alwars and Acharyas of Srivaishnavism).

2. Emphasis is laid on the worship of LINGA and the images in temples. Linga should never be mistaken for the phallus (This is a perversion of western interpretation). The Linga actually represents *a Pillar of Fire*. It is to make men understand that God has no form and yet has form for the worship, enlightenment and upliftment of the adorers of God.

Similarly every image or idol is highly symbolic of the Tattvas as in Pancaratra. For instance the image of Nataraja represents the highest symbolism possible. He has in hand a miniature drum whose vibration symbolises creation. He shows by His Abhaya mudra that the souls need have no fear. In an other hand he holds the fire of destruction. His fourth hand points downwards indicating that the souls should worship His feet (perform Saranagati - the Prapatti of the Vaishnavas) and obtain the eternal Bliss. The smile on His lips reveals His grace. His third eye symbolises Jnana.

So also Sivakami Devi represents and reveals God's love and mercy (Mula prakriti in Saivagama is called Manonmani). It is full of Benignity and Compassion for the Souls and the erring souls in particular (as in the Pancaratras too).

3. Just as the Pancaratras give the utmost importance to the Ashtakshari - 'Om Namo Narayanaya'- the Saivagamas give supreme importance to the five syllabled sacred Mantra 'Om Namah Sivaya'- It is by meditating on the Pancakshari that the souls can achieve the grace of God and attain His supreme Bliss and Beatitude.

In fact the twelve verses of the Raurava Agama form the foundation on which the majestic citadel of Saiva siddhanta system of philosophy has been raised. It is said they were taught by God Siva to Manikya vacakar and that Meikandar's Sivajnana bodham is just the tamil translation of the same. Accordingly the manifold universe with its variations of name and form of sex has emanated from Siva Himself. His Sakti creates the Universe out of Maya. Creation consists of Tanu (body), Karana (sense and motor organs), Bhuvana (worlds) and Bhoga (pleasures and pains).

According to Saiva siddhanta,

Maya is the material cause of the universe,

Siva is the efficient cause,

Sakti is the instrumental cause - (sahakari karana).

Creation of the universe is again His sport (as in the Pancaratras). It is to provide the souls an opportunity to taste the fruits of Karma and also to help them get rid of their Anavamala. Dissolution of the universe is to give the souls rest from Karma. God Siva is of course in the least affected by the unceasing changes and transformations of the universe (as in the Nityavibhuti of the Pancaratras). The Advaita doctrine of Saiva Siddhanta does never mean that there is only one existence. It is not EKA. It is non-difference. God is one with the souls, yet different from them and gives them embodiments in accordance

with their Karma. The souls are dependent on God. His grace (Arul sakti) pervades the entire realm of Being. God pervades everything and is yet beyond and above everything. He is both imminent and transcendent. Though the double aspects of Nitya Vibhuti and Leelavibhuti are not so clearly expressed, as in the Pancaratras, the ideas are the same.

VEERASAIVISM:

One other dominant aspect of South Indian saivism is Virasaivism, founded by Basava in the 12th century A.D. It reveals remarkable features that distinguish it from the Saiva Siddhanta of Tamilnad on the one hand and the Kashmir Saivism of Northern India on the other hand. Veerasaivism is patently an 'Agamanta cult' founded on the Agamas obviously an amplification of the Vedic Saiva cult. Lingayat and Aradhya in popular parlance refer manifestly to the Veerasaiva cult. The Aradhyas are brahmins who combine the Hindu Varnasrama dharma with the creed of Veera Saivism. They wear on their bodies the Linga along with the brahminical sacred thread. They repeat the Gayathri in addition to the Pancakshari and follow the brahminical Samskaras too.

Veerasaivism similar to other Saiva cults, believes in Siva as the ultimate reality from whom this entire universe is evolved and into whom the entire universe is retracted once again at the time of Dissolution. This Siva is both Imminent and Transcendent. Great importance is attached to Vibhuti, Rudraksha and Mantra. Sakti is the obedient hand maiden of Siva- Siva as before is the efficient cause, Sakti is the instrumental cause and Maya is the material cause of the Universe. This Sakti-Visishta advaita calls itself Nirvisesha Advaita to distinguish itself from Visistha Advaita on the one hand and 'Kevala Advaita' (as the Veerasaivas call it) of Samkaracharya on the other hand.

It is sometimes said that the Veerasaiva concept of Maya is different from that of and even superior to the Maya concept of Kashmir Saivism. The Veerasaiva schools refer to 'URDHVA

Maya' and 'ADHO Maya'. Urdhva Maya is also called Maha Maya or Suddha Maya and is said to be pure Sattva. The Adho Maya is said to be of a mixed nature, Sattva with Rajas and Tamas. The Maya referred to by the Kashmir school is identified by the Veerasaivas with their Adho Maya. We find a similar distinction in Saiva Siddhanta made between Suddha maya, Asuddha maya and Prakriti comparable to Sakti, Maya and Prakriti in Kashmir Saivism.

The Veerasaiva school emphasises Bhakti and Saranagati (as in Pancaratras) as the ultimate means of Liberation. A Lingayat or Veerasaiva is said to be one who practises:

1. Pancakshara,
2. Astha Varna and
3. Shat sthala.

The five Aksharas (Pancakshara) are:

1. Sivacara-Belief that Siva alone is the Para Brahma,
2. Lingacara-The worship of Siva in Linga,
3. Sadacara-Living a virtuous life,
4. Bhrityacara-Service to the Lord, Siva,
5. Ganacara-Service to the community of the devotees of the Lord.

The eight protective factors of the Devotee, Ashtavarnas are:

1. Guru
2. Linga worn on the body,
3. Jangama-the itinerant Jivanmukta (similar to a Bhagavata of Srivaishnavism).
4. Vibhuti-The scared ashes.
5. Rudraksha.
6. Padodaka-Sacred water with which the Linga, the feet of the Guru, and the feet of the Jangama are washed.
7. Prasada-Offering everything to God before consuming.
8. Mantra-The Pancakshara- 'OM Namah Sivaya'-

The Shat Sthalas: The Yogic Six Cakras:

1. Muladhara. 2. Svadhishtana, 3. Maṇipura,
4. Anahata, 5. Visuddhi, 6. Ajṇa.

Sivayoga will enable the soul to rise from plane to plane as stated in the shatsthalas and be full in oneself with divine grace and bliss in all the three sariras, the Sthula sarira, the Sukshma sarira and the Karana sarira, that are connected with it.

the Ishta Linga and the Tyagangas

the Prana Linga and the Bhogangas

the Maha Linga and the Yogangas respectively.

Siva yoga is said to consist of the five elements:

1. Siva Jnana, 2. Siva Bhakti, 3. Siva Dhyana,
4. Siva Vrata, 5. Siva Puja, (after Siva-diksha).

3. THE NORTHERN SCHOOL OF SAIVISM:

The Pratyabhijna School of Kashmir:

Among the authoritative works of this school are the 'Siva Sutras' of Vasu Gupta, the Spanda Karika of Kallata, Sivadrishti of Somananda Natha and the Pratyabhijna sutra of Utpala. (Pratyabhijnahridayam - No. 19 of the Adyar library series).

While the Saiva siddhanta system is based on the Sutras of Meyakonda Deva, the Kashmirian Pratyabhijna school is based on the Siva Sutras with their usual Vritti, Vartika and Bhashya. (J.C.Chatterjee ascribes Kashmir saivism to the end of 8th or the beginning of the 9th century while Saiva siddhanta is said to belong to the 13th Century). Kashmir Saivism is also based on the famous

TRIKA - PATI, PASU and PASA,
SIVA, SAKTI and ANU,
NARA, SAKTI and SIVA.

It differs particularly from the southern school of Saivism as it emphasises on the soul becoming one with God on liberation and not similar to God and maintaining its separateness even at the last stage. This advaitic aspect is made clear in Sivadrishti by Somananda, the protogonist of Kashmir Saivism, the Pratyabhijna school.

In Kashmir Saivism thr basic reality is SIVA who is beyond name and form, time and space. He is eternal and infinite Saccidananda. He is imminent as well as transcendent. The manifested universe is His imminent aspect made manifest. This aspect is His Sakti. He and His Sakti are one. Sakti has infinite aspects or modes of which the most prominent are five, namely:

Cit Sakti, Ananda Sakti, Iccha Sakti, Jnana Sakti and Kriya Sakti, corresponding to the five faces of Siva namely: Isana, Tatpurusha, Sadyojata, Aghora, and Vamadeva. Siva manifests by His samkalpa. He wills the Universe and Sakti evolves:

'Unmesha Nimishotpanna Vipanna Bhuvanâvalih'-

Evolution and Involution are but expressions of Sakti.

Unlike Samkara's Vivartavada, and Anirvacaniya khyati, which give only a relative reality to the manifest Universe, the Agamas in particular invariably emphasise and underline the real reality of the Manifest Universe. It is a type of Parinama vada even in the Pratyabhijna school. The world is affirmed as real as it is an aspect of the Supreme Reality. It affirms the reality of the World (as in the Pancaratra) as it is the concretisation of the Bliss of God, His Saccidananda. His Sakti causes Siva Tattva to emerge wherein the CIT aspect is in full manifestation. Siva and Sakti are like the Sunlight and the Sun. They together form the first SPANDA of Vibration which sets manifestation on its course (Similar to Sudarsana Tattva in the Pancaratra)

The five Tattvas are said to be:

1. Saiva Tattva - Consciousness.
2. Sakti Tattva - Bliss.

3. Sadakhya Tattva or Sadasiva Tattva - Will.
4. Aisvarya Tattva - Creativeness.
5. Sadvidya Tattva - Universal manifestation.

From Siva-Sakti state springs the Sadakhya Tattva or the Sadasiva Tattva in which there is the first subtle objectification of His Sadananda (Infinite undifferentiated eternal Bliss) In the next Aisvarya Tattva it becomes more objective. Then emerges Suddha vidya or Sadvidya tattva wherein Kriya sakti vitalises the pre-existing Iccha sakti.

Maya is an obscurer - "Tirodhanakari' - The universal experience in Suddha vidya becomes a localisted, finitised, individualised experience in Maya. Maya brings about the five forms of limitations - *Kancukas* or sheaths namely:

1. Kala	-	Time
2. Niyati	-	Causation
3. Raga	-	Desire
4. Vidya	-	Individualised consciousness
5. Kalā	-	Limitedness

These five Kancukas obscure respectively -

1. Nityatva	-	Eternity,
2. Vyapakatva	-	Pervasiveness,
3. Purnatva	-	Fullness,
4. Sarvajnatva	-	All consciousness,
5. Sarva Kartritva	-	All creativeness.

The experiences in this limited state are called the Purushas. These purushas are ultimately one with Parama Siva. Though each one of them is atomic (Anu) yet each one of them is potentially infinite (Parama siva). Each Purusha has his prakriti (where as in Samkhya, Prakriti is one for all the Purushas). In the Agamic system each Purusha has His Prakriti out of the total called MAYA. At this stage prakriti is in her equipoise of its three components of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. Then the fine becomes gross in diverse ways. From prakriti, buddhi (ideation),

ahamkara (egoity) and Manas emerge as evolutes one from another in the aforesaid order. From Ahamkara are born the five Jnanendriyas and the five Tanmatras. These Tanmatras by a process of Pancikarana become the five Mahabhutas which constitute the gross Universe.

Just as Parama Siva pervadas all the Tattvas and is yet unaffected by them and transcends them, even so each Tattva pervades and transcends its evolutes and thus exists fully in itself even after the manifestation of its evolutes. Thus Sakti becomes Prithvi by slow stages through Suddha vidya, Maya and Prakriti By Yoga we can rise to the Parama Siva state.

SRIKANTA'S SAIVISM:

Srikanta a South Indian Brahmin is the author of a famous Bhashya on the Vedanta sutras. He is obviously opposed to the Southern Saiva Siddhanta school. According to his own admission, he is the disciple of Svetacharya. Of course both the Siddhanta school and Srikanta's system agree in their doctrines of Pati, Pasu and Pasa. But Srikanta in accordance with the Vedic teaching reiterates that God Himself is also the material cause of the Universe. He describes the evolution of the Universe as an instance of Apurna Parinama (quite opposed to the Saiva siddhanta view). Though Srikanta refers to the 'Malatraya' namely (Mala, Karma and Maya) he does not underline the existence of 'Anavamala' with the same emphasis as the Siddhanta school does. Srikanta holds the view that the soul is atomic (Anu) where as the Saiva Siddhanta is of the opinion that the soul is infinite and pervasive (vibhu). Srikanta further points out that on liberation the soul attains God only by going through the Devayana - the path of the Gods. Srikanta is of the further opinion that it is God's wish that the souls should purify and perfect themselves and reach Him ultimately, as it is by God's own Samkalpa that Creation has been made possible. In its broad outlines there is much of similarity between the Pancaratra views and the views of the Srikanta school although the Ultimate Reality according to Srikanta is Siva and not Narayana.

THE SAKTA AGAMAS

THESE are designated as the Sakta School because the name given in them to the Supreme Being is 'SAKTI', regarded as *the World Mother*. These agamas also have their moorings in the Vedas. A Devi Sukta occurs in the Rigveda (Mandala X. Sukta 125). The Rigveda refers to various goddesses. DYĀVĀ - PRITHVI (Heaven Goddess and Prithvi goddess) form a two-fold divinity - The Prithvi Sukta (Rigveda X.18) exalts the Earth Goddess. The Rigveda also extols Aditi and Ushas. Aditi is the mother of the Gods. Ushas is the Goddess of the Dawn. She is praised and adored in 20 hymns of the Rigveda. Ratri, the goddess of the night, Vak, and goddess of speech, ILA, Dhishanā. Prisni, Rāgā, Sinīvāli and many others are praised. Srisukta exalts Mahalakshmi, Durga sukta extols Durga Devi and Nīli sukta ennobles NĪLĀ Devi. Among the Gayatris praising various deities, there is the Durga-Gayathri. The Kena Upanishad praises Uma as the Sakti of Brahman. In the Sita Upanishad Sita is called Mula prakriti and Maya. She is described as 'Sarva Veda Mayi', 'Sarva Deva Mayi', 'Sarva Loka Mayi' etc. The most important of all the Sakta Upanishads is of course the Devi Upanishad wherein a question is posed by the Gods to the Devi. 'Sarve vai Devīmupatasthuh Kāsitvam Mahadevī?'- The answer given is that she is the source of all the worlds, of all the beings in all the worlds and of all the Gods too. Incidentally the Mahadevi Gayatri 'Mahalakshmīsca Vidmahe Sarvasiddhisca Dhīmahi, Tannodevī Pracodayāt' and also the Durga mantra - 'Dum Durge duritam hara' are revealed. In the Ramayana sage Visvamitra is said to have taught Rama and Lakshmana the mantras BALA and

ATIBALA. In the Mahabharata Yudhishtira is said to have performed Durga-puja before undertaking Ajnatavasa in Viratnagara. In the Brahmanda - Purana we have the Lalitha upakhyana. Devimahatmya is to be found in the Markandeya purana. The Brahma Vaivarta and Skanda Puranas also extol the Devi. The Devi Bhagavata is entirely devoted to the praise of the Devi.

Among the fundamental works of this Sakta school are the Sakti sutras from which many quotations are cited by Bhaskara Raya in his commentary on Lalita sahasranama. Sir John Woodroffe and his collaborators in Bengal have published a number of Tantras. Saktagama is also called by the name of Devi agama. Under this school are classified:

5 Subhagamas,

64 Kaulagamas,

8 Misragamas.

Saundarya Lahari attributed to Sankara Bhagavatpaḍa also belongs to this school. (Adyar series). Varivasyā Rahasya of Bhaskara Raya is another very important work coming under the Saktagamas. The Saivagamas and the Saktagamas have the closest affinity between themselves as they both have arisen from the same stock.

The Saktagamas claim that it is the Agamas that are authoritative for the KALI age while admitting the validity of the Vedas, Puranas and Smritis for the other Yugas. The Kularnava Tantra says:

'Krite Srutyuktā Ācārāstretāyām smriti sambhavāh'

'Dvāparetu puranoktah Kalau agama sammatah'-

Incidentally it is pointed out that the Tantras form the heart and soul of all sacred lore and scriptures. A graphic description of the position of the Tantras is given in relation to the other sacred scriptures. It is said that while the Puranas form the body of the scriptures, the smritis its limbs, the six darsanas its senses and the Vedas its Jivatman so to say, the Agamas constitute the

Paramatman of the Scriptures meaning thereby that they form the quintessence as also the acme of all scriptural - knowledge.

The Saktagamas consider the Supreme Reality as the Mother. If the pre-dominant qualities of God are Prema and Daya, (love and compassion), it is in the fitness of things to consider God as the World mother. The worshipper becomes her little child. The soul that becomes a child identifies God as its mother, no wonder, as sister Nivedita explained once. Even Gita endorses the same opinion in the words:

'Pitāhamasya Jagato Mātā dhātā pitāmahah' - (IX.17)

The Saktagamas are practically an extension of the Atharva Veda especially of its Uttarakhanda called Saubhagya Khanda. The Rudrayamala speaks of Devi as 'Atharvaveda Śākhinī'. If God could be described as Universal Father, why not regard God as Universal Mother?

'Pum rupam vā smared Devi Strī - rupam vā Vicintayet'

'Athavā nishkalam dhyāyet saccidananda lakshanam'.

God like the soul is beyond form and sex and is Saccidananda says a Yamala -

'Neyam yoshinna ca pumān na shando na jadah smritah'

The Sakta philosophy postulates that it is Siva who becomes Sakti Sakti is only the dynamic aspect of the otherwise static Siva, who is the Matrix of the evolutes of Sakti. The Saktagamas say that between Siva and Sakti there is eternal non-separateness - 'Avinābhāva Sambandha' - In the Saktagamas Sakti, Maya or Prakriti is never regarded as the *principle of non-existence or illusion.* (as Sankara regarded it), but only as the principle of finitisation. The term Maya is derived from the root 'Mīyate' - that which measures. It is the principle of finitisation and measures the formless by creating forms. Maya sakti is an evolute of Sakti. It is neither Jada (unconscious and material) nor is it an unreality (tuccha or abhava). Siva by the power of Sakti becomes the Universe and the Jivas. The Tantras say that Siva

without Sakti is a corpse (a lifeless body). The relation between Siva the possessor of Sakti and Sakti He rules is one of identity. The one cannot be without the other. Siva as the ruler of the Universe rides the Bull. It means He rules according to Dharma, Satya (truth), Śauca (purity), Daya (kindness) and Dana (charity) constitute the four feet of Dharma conceived as a Bull. When Siva is worshipped, Sakti is worshipped and when Sakti is worshipped Siva is worshipped.

While the Upanishads describe the process of manifestation of the universe by the analogy of the spider and its self-woven web or by the simile of the seed containing the entire tree within itself gradually revealing, the Saktagamas call the manifestation of the universe and the souls by Mayasakti as an Emanation rather than a creation. The Agamas completely avoid the vivarta vada of Sankara. The manifestation is like the emergence of one flame from another flame not affecting the causal original flame in the least. In the passing from Sakti to Maya, Maya to Prakriti and Prakriti to Prithvi, we have only the super subtle becoming subtle, the subtle becoming the less subtle, the less subtle eventually becoming the gross and dense, there being only a change of state and no change of substance at all. That is the evolution of the Universe. Involution is just a return current in the reverse series'.

According to the Saktagamas both Prakriti and Purushas are evolutes of Sakti who Herself is one with Siva and not independent of Siva. Thus Saktaism posits Spirit as the Prius and Matrix of Matter (similar to Pancaratra). Herein lies the difference between the Saktagamas and the Samkhya philosophy. While Sankara's philosophy posits Saguna aspect of Brahman as lower, as 'Kalpita' and Upasya' and the Nirguna aspect as higher 'Paramarthika and Jneya', while the Pancaratras deny absolutely the concept of Nirguna Brahman, the Saktagamas declare that both aspects are being equally real and yet one. Sakti is one with Nirguna Siva. Her emergence from Siva makes Siva Saguna (the Pancaratras may ask is not Siva the supreme, with Sakti latent in Him Saguna?) Otherwise how can Sakti emerge from Him if not already in Him?) The Saktagamas say He is the Godhead, the Lord and yet one with her.

It is contended in the Saktagamas that Sakti as Vidyā is the revealer of Spiritual truth, just as she is the 'Limiter' or 'Obscurer' as Māyā and the projector of the Universe as Prakriti. She is said to be capable of bestowing on the votaries either the Saguna Brahma sakshatkara or Nirguna Brahma sakshatkara, as desired. In Lalitha Sahasranama two of Her thousand names 'SIVAJNANA PRADAYINI' and 'BRAHMATMAIKYA SVARUPINI' are significant.

More than precept and doctrinaire philosophy, the Saktagamas emphasise practical discipline for self-realisation. It is the note-worthy feature of all the six Sakta Amnayas and the four Sakta Sampradayas (Kerala, Kashmira, Gauda and Vilasa). All of them emphasise:

1. MANTRA -Litary -'Concentrated recitation of certain seed-sounds and formulae, charms filled with the power of personification in the form of sound',

2. YANTRA - 'A geometrical diagram being the seat of the spiritual and ritualistic transubstantiation'.

3. MUDRA - 'Ritual gestures, a veritable language of the hands and the fingers'.

4. NYASA - 'Meditative placing of the tips of the fingers and palm of the right hand on the various specified parts of the body accompanied by the intonation of the Mantras'.

5. BUTA-SUDDHI - 'Cleaning (suddhi) of the five elements (Bhutas) of which the body is made.'

6. KUNDALINIYOGA - 'Arousing the divine power within, that is said to be asleep, withdrawn from operation, coiled away like a sleeping serpent (kundalini)'.

7. KRIYA -'Instructions for construction and consecration of temples, altars and images'.

8. CARYA - 'Religious rites'.

9. SIDDHI - "Achievement of the ends such as supernatural powers of Bliss".

The Bhava Cudamani Tantra gives a detailed description of the various classes and dispositions of men (BHAVA) and the Sadhanas that are prescribed for them in accordance with their dispositions. Tantric sadhana always depends on the personality of the Sadhaka. All cannot pursue the same Tantric discipline, just as all cannot take up to the Tantric cult itself. It all depends on the capacity and innate dispositions of the individuals concerned. For instance a person endowed with Sattvic qualities cannot be initiated into the same sadhana as is meant for a man steeped in Tamas. So also a person noted for his Rajasic qualities cannot be initiated into a sadhana meant for a person of the Satvic or Tamasic disposition. Therefore the Tantras classify men under three heads:

i. DIVYA : of divine disposition (Sattvic).
ii. VIRA : of heroic disposition (Rajasic).
iii. PASU : of animal disposition (Tamasic).

These are called the three Bhavas. Padmapadacharya, a favourite disciple of Sankaracharya in his commentary on the Prapancasara commends 5 different ways of viewing the teachings of Tantra sastra.

1. Sthula or gross,
2. Sukshma or subtle,
3. Karana or causal,
4. Samanya or cosmic,
5. Sakshi or witness-like.

Everyone is not competent to pursue in all the five ways. In relation to the three Bhavas or types are delineated the 7 Acaras Rules of conduct (as described in Kularnava Tantra) They are also the seven stages:

I. Veda : The first stage whence the cleanliness of the body and purity of the mind are cultivated.

II. Vaishnava: The second stage whence Bhakti is cultivated.

III. Saiva : The third stage whence Jnana is obtained.

IV. Dakshina : The fourth stage in which the gains earned in the 3 previous stages are consolidated,

V. Vama : The fifth stage of renunciation - just the reverse of Dakshina.

VI. Siddhanta : The sixth stage whence one comes to a definite conclusion on the relative merits of the two pathways or pursuits of enjoyment and renunciation.

VII. Kaula : This is the final or the seventh stage of reaching the KULA or Brahman.

These are the seven steps or stages or Acaras by which one gradually rises to the zenith of reaching and realising the ultimate. Initiation is a very important factor in Tantra. The first three acaras only are possible for the Pasubhava type of people. The 4th and the 5th are possible for the Virabhava type. The last two are practicable for the Divya type. Some say Kaula alone belongs to the Divya type. Parasurama Kalpa Sutra is of the opinion that till an aspirant reaches the 5th stage of Vama he must be under the constant vigil of the Guru as otherwise he may fumble and blunder leading to disaster. It is only after attaining the fifth stage can the votary be entrusted to himself. Visvasara Tantra states: - 'He truly is liberated in this life who knows the seven acaras comprised within the 3 Bhavas'.

These 7 acaras closely correspond to the seven knowledge planes, the Jnana bhumikas or the Sapta bhumikas of Yoga Vasishta (of course with minor differences) namely:

1. Vividisthā or Śubhecchā,
2. Vicāraṇā
3. Tanumānasā,
4. Sattvāpatti,
5. Asamśakti,
6. Padarthabhāvinī,
7. Turiyā.

The major difference between the two namely the 7 Acaras and the 7 Jnana bhumikas lies in this that while in the former, one

reaches Jnana through Bhakti, in the latter one realises Bhakti through Jnana.

Worship is Saktaism is divided into 5 aspects. The Para Tattva, the ultimate and the highest is ordinarily beyond the comprehension of an average individual because it is constituted of pure Jnana and is Formless. So an average individual adopts a form for worship. The Prapancasara of Sankarabhagavatpada and the Sarada Tilaka of Lakshmana Desikendra give a graphic description of the modes of worship:

i. The ordinary ritualist offers oblations into the fire which is his deity of worship.

ii. The Jnani, the meditator has the object of worship within his heart itself.

iii. The 'Aprabuddha', the non-awakened worships the Para in the Image or Murti.

iv. The man who knows the Atman who has obtained the knowledge of the self sees 'HIM' every where.

v. The fifth aspect is the highest aspect, whence the worshipper and the worshipped become 'ONE'.

The Sakta Tantras posit the two aspects of Brahman: the Nirguna and the Saguna. The Nirguna is said to be the transcendent form without the manifest aspect of Sakti. It is from the Saguna form that Sakti manifests. From Sakti emanates *NADA* (sound) and from Nada emanates *BINDU*. At the time of dissolution everything returns to Sakti Herself. It is when Sakti, the Tattva approaches the Light (CIT or knowledge) that there arises 'Vicikīrshā' - *the desire to create.* Then Bindu is formed. Sakti bursts as it were and there ensue *BINDU*, *NADA* and *BIJA*. Of these three Bindu partakes of the Character of Siva (Jnana), Bija is patently Sakti herself and Nada is the inherence between BINDU and BIJA. It is when in the Bindu bursts that there issues forth 'Sabda Brahman'. It is this 'SABDA BRAHMAN'

that provides the 'Caitanya', the urge, the stimulation for manifestation in all beings. It is itself the source of the letters of the alphabet, of words and all other sounds by which all thoughts are exchanged. Every sound has meaning. Sound and meaning are inseparable.

It comes to this according to the Saktagamas that the aspirant, the Upasaka, while he makes a beginning with a material accessory in the form of an image, gradually ascends to *THAT* which is beyond speech and form. The image used in worship is of the Form of the Mantra chosen for him by his GURU. The Mantra and the image represent his Conception of Brahman - 'Svakīya Arcā Murti' - the deity of one's choice, 'ISHTA DEVATA' - the form of Brahman evolved out of one's own Mantra.

Ordinarily there are the four stages of 'speech formation'. It is at the 4th stage - 'Vaikhari' - that the sound becomes audible. Prior to it there are the 3 stages of 'sound formation' that are inaudible.

1. Para: Is the first stage of sound emanation or formation. It is just a stress towards articulation. It is located at 'Muladhara', the lowest of the 6 cakras (the six centres in the human body).

2. Pasyanti: It is the next stage - It means 'seeing'. At this 2nd stage the stress takes a definite shape.

3. Madhyama: It is the third stage. It is the intermediate.

4. Vaikhari: Is the fourth stage after the 3 stages of 'silent sound'.

Padmapadacharya is of the opinion that even anterior to *Para* there are three other stages of:

1. SUNYA - The vibrant stage.

2. SAMVIT - The stage when the stress of the sound is about to be formed.

3. SUKSHMA - When it is in the actual process of formation.

There are the 6 Cakras: 6 centres in the human body:

1. Muladhara: This is the basic centre situated just above the organ of generation. It is called the region of the 'Earth'.

2. Svadhishtana: It is just above the region of Muladhara. It is considered the region of water.

3. Manipura: It is the region of the spinal cord opposite the naval. It is the region of fire.

4. Anāhata: It is opposite the heart and is the region of Air.

5. Viśuddha: It is the reagion opposite the throat. It is the region of ether.

6. Ājnā: It is opposite to the region of the junction of the eyebrows. It is the region of psychic visions.

(Over and above Ājnā, there is the 'Sahasrara' in the head). It is stated in the Tantras that there are other centres beyond the Ājnā. Opinion is divided as to the number of these cakras. It is stated that by a gradual process of piercing through these cakras, the 6 paths - ADHVANS that lead to the realisation of the Supreme, are conquered and consolidated. These are:

1. Kāla (Attributes): It consists of Nivritti, Pratishta, Vidya, Santi and Santyatita.

2. Tattva (Categories): According to the Vaishnavas there are 32 in number and according to the Saivas 36.

3. Bhuvana (Regions): Usually the five namely the regions of earth, water, fire, air and ether. As per the views of Vayaviya samhita the lowest of the Bhuvanas is the muladhara and the highest is that of UNMANI. Whatever be the explanation, the different Bhuvanas are the different stages of the mind of the aspirant.

4. **Varna:** Letters of the alphabet.

5. **Pada:** Words formed by the combination of letters.

6. **Mantra:** The entire galaxy of the Mantras with their esoteric meanings and symbolic representations.

The alphabets are of primary significance in the Saktagamas. They are called the Mother, 'Matrika'. If Devi is the 'Saririn', her Sarira, body is the'Sabdarthas'. The letters of the alphabet are collectively the source from which every word and every Mantra is evolved. It is out of the MANTRA that the deity is produced. Sankaracharya invokes Goddess Sarada in his opening verse in "Prapanca sara', with the words 'May Sarada purify your mind'. The body of Sarada is composed of the *Seven Groups* (Varga) into which the sanskrit alphabet is reduced. So the Mantras obtained from the 'Matrikas' are none other than the representatives of the Devi Herself. Hence the Mantra itself is the Devata. The famous 'Pancadasakshari' mantra is born of the 15 Matrikas. It has the 3 parts of 'Vagbhava kuta', 'Kamaraja kuta' and 'Saktikuta'. With its most esoteric 4th part added the same Mantra becomes the 'Sodashakshari'. Thus every letter in the alphabet is vibrant with 'Sakti'.

The Sakta Tantras enunciate the most fundamental basic principle that Siva and Sakti are one in essence. There is absolutely no difference between them. While explaining the Emanation of the Universe out of this Primeval Sivā-Sakti, the Agamas accept the 36 Tattvas. Of these the 5 Suddha Tattvas - SIVA, SAKTI, NADA, BINDHU, and SUDDHA VIDYA are the most important. While Siva is 'Suddha jnana svarupa' of the nature of pure intelligence, Sakti is 'Vimarsa Svarupini'. Nada and Bindu point to the creative mood. The various appellations of Sakti, such as 'Siva-Saktaikarupini', 'Sivamurtih', 'Svaprakasa, Vimarsa rupini', Nadarupini, Bindumandala vasini, Icchasakti - Jnanasakti - Kriyasakti-Svarupini' - all connote the

oneness of Siva and Sakti as also their Prakasa - vimarsa svarupa and their emanations.

As the primary source from which all Mantras emanate, Sakti as Sarada or Sarasvati (the queen of speech) is given the first place. Sakti has also other aspects with different Mantras. Her other aspects are Sri, Bhuvanesvari, Durga and Kali.

According to the Saktagamas the individual Jiva is potentially Siva. Unfortunately it is veiled, bound, limited and restrained by the factors of Mala and Pasa. On a more comprehensive scale the limitations are numbered five and called the Kancukas. (As in Saivagama, there is close affinity between the two agamas). It is these Kancukas that actually outline the descent of the Universe from its ultimate perfect source namely Siva-Sakti. The 5 Kancukas have therefore their place, significance and role in the process of descent and formation of this universe, through the 36 principles or forms, Tattvas as they have been called. As the individual soul is subject to these five restricting factors it is apurna, imperfect.

So if ascent back is required the 5 Kancukas have slowly to be neutralised and completely resolved. The limitations are to be overcome if the purity, perfection of freedom of the ultimate source is to be realised. Obviously the ascent of the individual soul, the mighty 'little' atom will have to be made in the order of creative descent only but with its sign reversed, on the reverse gear. The Tantras speak of the 6 paths or steps 'Shadhadvā'.

As already suggested the cosmic descent is traced on the following lines:

Sakti is Nada and Sakti is Bindu. One is the soil and the other is the seed for purposes of all cosmic generations. From Bindu the next order of polarity is found in Kala and Varna. Kala is the aspect of power both for evolution and involution. It is the starting point for all differentiations from the integrated whole of Nada-Bindu. Varna is just the 'Measure or index'. It signifies 'Spanda' - Perfect activity Kala and Varna are logically prior to Tattva and Mantra. The next in order are Bhuvana and Pada.

Bhuvana is the Universe as it is. Pada is the actual formation (first by mind reaction and then by speech).

At this level there is the terminus for the cosmic descent.

In this creative descent, the five-fold perfection of the Supreme is actually veiled or limited by the five Kancukas, the contracting factors: Absoluteness (svatantra), Eternity (Nityatā), Eternal self-contentment (Nitya-triptatā), Omnipotence (Sarvakarttrita) and Omniscience (Sarvajnata) - these five perfections at the source are veritably constrained by the five Kancukas respectively, namely: the binding factor (Niyati), the Tense factor (Kāla), Appetite (Raga), the factor of apportionment (Kāla) and the blinding factor (Avidyā).

These stabilise in the individual as in the tiniest thing or atom of the Universe. It is CIT or Cit-Sakti pervading the entire universe of matter and souls. So the soul to realise its own inherent perfectness or divinity, it has to go up by the reverse gear. The so-called creation is just evolution, manifestation, the outgoing current from Siva-Sakti leading to differentiation and diversification. The Suddha Sattva gradually passes into Asuddha sattva by a graduated series of descent. Finally in the individual, it is the coiled curve, the Kundalini equated with Karma - the coiled serpent in a supine form with its head downwards. Though in a supine condition, it is the magazine of a latent power. Sublimation therefore consists in rousing the kundalini, the awakening the serpent-power, in uncoiling the coil.- Only by raising the Kundalini can the Asuddha sattva be corrected into Suddha sattva. The Jiva has to rise with the very Sakti that made him fall. The very enemy is to be turned into an ally. As Saktananda Tarangini puts it - 'The very poison which kills becomes the elixir of life when suitably t eated and tested by the wise physician.'

The Laya or Kundalini yoga effectively demonstrated how by the means of sublimation consisting of Sodhana, Suddhi, Uddhara and Caitanya, a reorientation is made possible from the

downward facing Kundalini to an upward facing posture, helping it to pierce successfully through the cakras, gradually transcend the limitations and achieve realisation in consciousness of the Supreme identity. Siva-Sakti in one called 'Para Samvit' - Siva-Sakti in close embrace in the abode of the thousand petalled lotus - the region of 'Sahasrāra'. The esoteric practice of rousing the Kundalini and making it pierce through the Cakras is not the only means of rousing the Kundalini. In every type of Sadhana whether of worship, Jnana or Bhakti it is roused as all these are regarded the expressions of Cit-Satta, Cit-Sakti and Cit-Vilasa. Apart from the Laya-yoga the Saktagamas emphasise the other aspects of Yoga also such as Hata-yoga, Mantra-yoga and Raja-yoga. But the special feature of the Saktagama consists in instructing how to rouse the Kundalini Sakti coiled in the Muladhara (Sacral plexus) and taking it through the Sushumna nadi in and beyond the various Cakras (Svadhishtana, Manipura, Anahata, Visudhi and Ajna) into Sahasrara or the thousand petalled lotus in the brain where the individual can attain union with Sakti and Siva and thus realise the Supreme, Eternal, Infinite Perfect Bliss.

The Panca Makaras, the five 'M' s, namely Madya, Mamsa, Matsya, Mudra and Maithuna, the very five forbidden things of the common herd of men and women are actually made the Panca Tattvas of the Tantric cult for the Sadhakas of the Vira-bhava type, in particular. Of course the 'Vira' employs the five 'M' s for self-realisation. They are not at all considered as marks of libertinism and depravity. The Panca Tattva are meant for sublimation and not license. It is not at all for the degradation of the individual. In truth it is to sublimate the Eros and not to intensify the Eros. In the words of Sir John Woodroffe- "The Sadhaka (the Tantric student) is taught not to think that we are one with the Divine in liberation only, but here and now, in every act we do. For in truth all such is Sakti. It is Siva who as Sakti is acting in and through the Sadhaka ..... When this is realised in every natural function, then each exercise thereof ceases to be a mere animal act and becomes a religious rite - a Yajna. Every

function is a part of the Divine action (Sakti) in nature........ When the Vira eats, drinks or has sexual intercourse, he does so not with the thought of himself as a separate individual satisfying his own peculiar limited wants, an animal filching as it were from nature the enjoyment he has, but thinking of himself in such enjoyment as Siva, saying 'Sivoham', 'Bhairavoham' ' I am Siva', 'I am Bhairava'.

The Pancatattvas are of course used in Vamacara Saktaism. In fact there are the two ways of worshipping the Devi - Dakshinacara or Dakshina marga and Vamacara or Vama marga. The Lalita Sahasranama refers to them by stating one of the names of the Devi to be - 'Savyapasavya margastha' -The word Vama is derived from the root Vāma (left) and not from Vāmā meaning woman. All the Saktas adore women as Devi herself.

'Strina padatalan drishtva guruvadbhavayet sada' -

The difference between the two Acaras is one of Bhava and rituals. Even among the Vamacarins there are persons who do not use meat, sex and wine. There are vamacarins who worship only Kumaris (girls) upto the age of nine or their own wives. The Pancatattvas need not always be actual. They may be substituted in the same way as meat and wine are substituted in Vedic rituals of late. For instance ginger is placed instead of meat and tender coconut water in a bell-metal vessel is placed instead of wine. It is only in Vamacara saktaism that these five articles are factually insisted upon. But these five very same articles have different meanings for different classes of worshippers. In fact the Kularnava Tantra says :

The wine is actually the nectar which flows from the union of Kundalini Sakti with Siva at the Sahasrara. It is the ambrosia flowing from the Cit-Candra-mandala in Yoga. He is said to eat the flesh who kills by the sword of Jnana the animals of Punya and Papa and thinks of the Supreme Siva alone. He who controls the senses is the eater of fish -

'Somadhārā kshared yā tu Brahmarandrād Varānane,

Pītvā ānandamayim tām yah sa eva madhyasādhakah,

Māśabdād rasanā jneyā t adamsān rasanā priyān,
Sadā yo bhakshayed Devi sa eva mamsa sādhakah,
Ganga Yamunayormadhye matsyau dvau caratah sadā
Tau matsyau bhakshayed yastu sabhaven matsyasādhakah,
Sahasrāre Mahāpadme Karnikā mudrikām caret,
Maithunam Paramam tattvam Srishtisthityanta kāranam.

Mamsa bhakshana is also the control of the tongue. Matsyas are the Ida and Pingala. Mudra is the centre of Sahasrara. Maithuna is the union of the Soul and the Supreme.

To be a Sadhaka according to Gandharva Tantra one has to be a daksha (self-confident and intelligent), jitendriya - (have self-control), pure (suci), an āstika (believer in God and the Scriptures). Above all one must be non-dualist (dvaita-hina). He should never be a Kamuka (lustful) or a man without a sense of shame (nirlajja). The Sammohana tantra says while Sakti is one with Siva, Siva is Paramatman identical with Nirguna Siva. Siva is said to be Nirvikara, Nishkala, Nirmala, Nirguna, Arupa and Akshara. He is also called Isvara, Sarvajna, Visvatma, Suddha Sattva maya, Saguna, Sākāra and Sakala. Maya is an evolute of Sakti and the Individual soul or the Jiva is but Siva limited by the Kancukas which are the Mayic evolutes. It is Maya-Sakti which evolves into prakriti which evolves once again into the Universe including Prithvi. Herein lies the divergence between the Saktagama and the Pancaratra. The ultimate can never be regarded as Nirguna. It is not God Himself that is the Individual Jiva. It is unbecoming of God to get Himself ensnared by the Kancukas and be called a soul in distress. Further it is with such a wrong postulation that the Saktagama announces that the soul when liberated becomes Siva Himself. In other words we observe in the Saktagamas the essential fallacy of Advaita from the point of view of the Pancaratras. The Kularnava Tantra says: I. 108.

'Advaitam Sivenoktam' -

'Aikyam sambhavayeddhiman jivasya Brahmanopica,

Aham Devi Na canyosmi Brahmaivaham na soka bhak-'

'Saccidananda rupoham nityamuktasvabhavavan,

Tayā sahitayā ātmānameki-bhutam vicintayet'-

Saktagama strikes the note of Advaita vedanta as Sir John Woodroffe himself says that the Sakta Tantra "is the Sadhana - Sastra of Advaita vada" - (Sakti and Sakta. p. 41).

The Kularnava Tantra (IX.42) makes a pointed reference to it when it says:

Pāśabaddho bhaved Jivah Pāśamuktah sadāśivah'

In general there is the clear difference between Advaita Vedanta view of the Universe, God and soul and the Agamic view of the Universe, God and soul.

Saktagamas are said to have been pronounced by Siva Himself to Parvati in the form of dialogues, the questions being put by Devi and the answers being given by Siva, similar to the Saivagamas. The Tantras are open to all classes, castes and both the sexes.

'Sarvavarnadhikarasca Nārīnāyogya eva ca' - says the Gautami Tantra. Women can attain to the status of preceptors too. A well-known verse says that while within the circle of Devi worship (Bhairavi Cakra) all are Brahmanas, where are outside it the castes and sexes are separate.

'Pravritte Bhairavī cakre sarve varnā dvijātayah,

Nivritte Bhairavi cakre sarve varnāh prithak prithak'-

Saktagamas are very interesting in their own way from the academic point of view although from the practical point of view they are sometimes dangerous of pursuit. Any carelessness or lapses on the part of the Sadhaka may lead to disastrous consequences. The technical know-how of the Sakta sadhanas are very complicated indeed.

TO SUM UP

IT IS NOW clear the Agamas are in complete agreement with the vedas and that too with the cosmic view of the Upanishads. The Agamas actually amplify the Vedic ideas in a consistent and systematic way. The Agamic ideas are in consonance with the Smritis too and are corroborated by the Itihasas also. The philosophies of the Agamas are no more theorisations as they are demonstrated in the practical disciplines and ways of realisation, vouched for. They are doubly sure for their grounds as they reveal verifications from Sadhana and illustrations from real realisations.

All the Agamas whatever be their titles have a set pattern in the disposition of their discourses. They divide their subject-matter uniformly into the following four sub-divisions:

1. Jnana Pada,
2. Yoga Pada,
3. Kriya Pada,
4. Carya Pada.

All the Agamas emphasise the three Realities:

1. A Supreme monotheistic GOD,
2. Innumerable individual Souls,
3. The Objective Universe in all its Variety.

All the Agamas claim their source in God Himself and His spoken words to the fortunate seers and sages.

While the Vaishnava Agamas call the Ultimate Source of the Supreme Person or Vishnu or Narayana, the Saivagamas give Him the name SIVA and the Saktagamas emphasise the Sakti aspect of Siva. All the Agamas unanimously pronounce that the

Supreme Person, GOD can be worshipped in the Arca form; that God lives in the consecrated Images or Lingas or Cakras or any other symbolic forms for the benefit and convenience of mankind; and that the lovers of God, the seekers of Salvation can surrender to Him in His living presence in the Image, the object of worship and adoration.

Barring the Pancaratra Agamas, in a few other Agamas we sometimes come across a view expressed that Brahman is also Nishkala, Nirvikara and Nirguna. In other words, we come across the Acosmic veins of the Upanishads running through parallel to the Cosmic veins. We also come across the note of the Jiva becoming one with Brahman on attaining Salvation. Of course God is Antaryamin too. That is only one of the five modes of His existence, Panca Prakaras. He is imminent in everyone. Realising God in oneself through yogic practices and attaining Samadhi is not false. It helps the Sadhaka to attain Kaivalya. That is complete Liberation all right from all the taints of Karma and re-birth. But it is not Salvation, Moksha in the complete sense of the term!

The background of the Agamic philosophy is such whatever be its title that the Soul, the Jivatman is just a separate entity from God, atomic in existence - it has divine descendence, divine inheritance and inherence too. Its ultimate source is God Himself all right. At the same time the reality of the Soul is such it is separate from God though not independent of God. When actually divested of all its Karmic associations it attains to its original status of pristine purity all right; but it can never be one with God. That is impossible! After all the essential trait of the Jivatman is its 'Seshatva', absolute and eternal subordination to God, the Supreme.

The Agamas strike at the very root of the Nishprapanca ideal of Vedanta. However pure and noble a Soul may have made itself to be even with God's Grace apart from its own efforts, it is very derogatory on the part of the Soul not to be aware of God's Glory and Suzerainty and of serving Him. It clearly indicates that the

Soul is not yet fully restored, to its native condition of pristine purity the hall mark of which is the knowledge of God's Greatness and Glory and one's own absolute dependence on Him for ever.

Some of the Agamas (Of course with the exception of the Pancaratras) speak of Brahman in terms of His Nirguna aspect along with His Saguna aspect. This is a patent Contradiction. He cannot be both. God is always with Sakti and the Six Gunas as enumerated in the Pancaratras. Otherwise the manifestation of the Universe becomes ludicrous. From a Nirguna Vastu nothing substantial can come out. It is not strictly logical. There is no magic in God's Leela and there is no madness in God's ways. Emanation, Manifestation or call it even Creation is always strictly in conformity to the principle of Satkaryavada, Brahma Parinama Veda.

Perhaps many of the Acharyas hark upon the conditions of the Cosmic night, Purushi Ratri, during the great Deluge. Even there everything is in God (of course in a subtle condition), safe and secure, waiting only for the Dawn to break up, for God to make up His mind, to resolve and do the Samkalpa. Even the Souls whether bound or unbound are still held by Him during the Great Deluge, carried by Him on His Person. It is all God's will about Cosmic functions, His Personal affair with which the poor Individual Jiva has nothing to do. Then why should the Individual Jiva think of 'Brahmaikya', 'Brahma-Nirvana', as the acme of the Soul's emancipated condition, it is hard to understand.

Even in genuine Samadhi state, the feeling of identity with Brahman one cannot have by completely losing one's individuality. Without the subject-object disparity there can never be an awareness, a feeling or anything of that kind. I personally feel there has been some type of a juggling of words or a confusion of language whence anyone can sputter out that he has union with God or identity with Brahman. What is this identity exactly and how can one be aware of it if it is complete identity?

Just as Souls have no death so also they cannot have any final disintegration or mysterious evaporation. They cannot be sucked away into an absolute in the sense of being non-entified. No Scriptures can admit that. Of course there are Upanishadic sayings seemingly inclined towards such a claim and perhaps they have to be properly interpreted and should not be taken literally, according to the Pancaratras. The Souls can never be lost even in the last resort in God's constitution.

Often the question is raised, why this world, why all this manifestation or emanation or even creation. It is clearly pointed out in the Pancaratras that the entire Universe with all its living and non-living beings is the Leela-Vibhuti of God. God gave out the World and the Souls and then gave the Souls freedom of will, liberty of thought and freedom of action. Since then He has been closely watching the Universe. When the Jivas and the material factors have come into contact with each other and are in play so to say it has been revealed that the trend of the Jiva is to get itself more and more involved in the game, get more and more unclean from birth to birth and completely forget its source and sanctity. It looks as though it would never like to come out of the game, think of its home let alone the parents at home. Again God is watching the players closely let alone from a distance, even by being in them. He is not only watching, He has also the greatest sympathies; He is very merciful indeed. Not only is He anxiously watching, He is also patiently waiting for everyone of the Jivas to return to Him. He is not alone in this. Along with Him there is His consort for whose sake indeed the whole Leelavibhuti is in progress.

The Pancaratras give a beauiful description of a chain of Emanations and of the Cosmic evolution too. The imminence of God is such He resides in every one of the Images Consecrated and installed. The Jivas can turn to God anytime. If they do not do so they will be reminded to do so. Finally it is God Himself who comes down in search of His errant sons. Apart from Karma, Jnana and Bhakti, the means of Prapatti is beautifully extolled in

the Pancaratra Agamas. Ārta prapatti, Saranagati is sure to work and work quickly too. If one really feels truly humble before his Heavenly Parents like a helpless child and craves for the Parent's help, it is there ever ready. There may be the hauteur of thinking of the lines of seeking self-realisation, 'Atmananda'. But it is not by that very fact 'Brahmananda'. The soul is ever dependent on God, unfortunately it may forget that simple fact by the infection of Avidya or Ahamkara. The Soul is cashiered by its association with Prakriti which is a symbol of its fall from its high status of knowledge and love of God. To get rid of these Karmic taints so many Sadhanas have been prescribed from times immemorial by various systems and schools. The thirty-two varieties of Brahma-Vidya prescribed in the Vedanta are difficult of practice. Hatayoga, Mantra yoga, Raja yoga and Laya yoga are also not easy of practice by one and all. Even Karma, Jnana and Bhakti have their own limitations in the case of all. But the greatness of the Pancaratra and a few other Agamas lies in this that they have underlined the Prapatti Marga. Let man cultivate a love for God by knowing His Greatness. Not only is He Omniscient, Omnipotent and Omnipresent, His full of Mercy and Grace. Let man have absolute faith and trust in God. Let man depend on God and none else. God is sure to come to his doors. God is sure to provide succour to the humble seekers of His Grace. He never lets down those who depend on Him absolutely and always. Trust is God is One's surest strength and faith in God is ever unfailing. An innocent appeal to God with the honest feeling of helplessness in oneself is the surest means of obtaining God's Grace and achieving ultimately Salvation too.

The Pancaratra Agamas have done the greatest service of mankind by and large. They have emphasised the One God as the Supreme Father beaming with Mercy and Grace. Father implies a Mother and the role of 'SRI' in the Pancaratras is also great in making a just and stern disciplinarian a forgiving father too for the soul. The intercession of the Heavenly Mother on behalf of Her erring children, the repentent souls is really moving.

The Agamas have replaced almost all the Vedic rituals by the innocuous forms of worship and adoration. They have bypassed the strenuous paths of Yoga beset with innumerable hazards even for those who can take up to them. They have displaced the Brahma Vidyas mostly steeped in arduous ascetic practices and highly intelligent technicalities by the simple approach of the heart namely Bhakti and Saranagati. They have provided an easy platform for performing Prapatti in the presence of the Arca form of the Lord. They have underlined simple living and advanced a community of art-less Souls and honest believers. Above all they have advocated trust in a GURU as a prelude to trust and faith in God. They have struck at the root of the distinctions of caste or sex among the lovers of God. He is the true servant of God who serves His devotees first and foremost. The worship of the Bhagavatas is in itself the worship of the Bhagavat.

They have thrown open a public thoroughfare to Moksha. It is the shortest as also the straight and the safest route. Gone for ever are the old conservative ideas of viewing God meant only for a privileged few, the VIP's of Vedantic aristocracy. God is in everyone, everywhere and for all. To know that with feeling and conviction is to elevate oneself to HIS Grace. There are no barriers to GOD except by one's own making through the arrogance of Self-love and the consequent apathy towards the rest of His Creation.

It is the AGAMAS that have made possible the innumerable temples and convenient objects of worship with the living presence of GOD therein. There is no village without a Temple and there is no home without an IDOL or an IMAGE for adoration. The individual's conscience is ever kept awake, always tuned to a divine hormony whether at home or outside it.